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MAY 2004
WORLD SOCCER comment

LOYALTY has always been a strange concept in football. Clubs take supporters for granted, stretching the commitment and finances of loyal fans to the limit. In contrast, supporters demand, but don't always receive, the same degree of loyalty from the players and coaches whose wages they pay.

The recent examples of Ailton and Sven Goran Eriksson are cases in point. Both men faced heavy fire from critics who used loyalty as a stick to beat them with. Yet their situations were very different.

Ailton, Werder Bremen's Brazil-born striker, was condemned – quite rightly – for agreeing to take Qatari nationality, with a view to playing for the Gulf state's national team, in return for a large bundle of cash. Ailton's position would be hard to defend, even by the most mercenary of agents. FIFA acted swiftly to rebuff the striker and other players targetted by Qatar, yet the situation will not go away. Certainly if some of the recruitment techniques seen at the African Nations Cup are anything to go by.

Eriksson's contract extension – in effect a reward for his loyalty to England in the face of a hugely tempting offer (we assume) from Chelsea – was castigated by sections of the English press. The xenophobia that is never far from the surface manifested itself in a series of attacks on Eriksson and the Football Association.

Yet people have very short memories: Eriksson rescued a failing World Cup qualifying campaign and pulled England out of the tactical dead-end street that Kevin Keegan had led them down. The alternatives to Eriksson do not bear thinking about. The FA knew that, and the Swede and his agent were able to work it to their advantage.

For all Eriksson's strengths and weaknesses, we give managers too much credit when things go right, and blame them too much when things go wrong. Ultimately, it is the players who decide football matches, not coaches. This month (page 26), we celebrate one player, Ronaldo, who may yet save the season for his club, Real Madrid, and coach, Carlos Queiroz.

PS. Our next issue will be a 132-page special guide to Euro 2004. It will have a one-off price, £3.75, but as with previous collector's editions, subscribers will get their copies at no extra cost.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

*** SAVE MONEY ON WORLD SOCCER SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER ON PAGE 28

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Copa America draw

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Mourinho makes his mark

PORTUGAL: FC Porto have become a force to be reckoned with under their bright young coach. **Page 20**

Ailton 'transfer' blocked by FIFA

QATAR: The proposed move by the Qatari FA to hire Werder Bremen's Brazil-born striker Ailton has been stymied by FIFA. **Pages 6, 12 & 66**

Scandinavian league gets the OK

A proposed winter league featuring 12 teams from Denmark, Norway and Sweden has got the go-ahead from UEFA. **Page 51**

Werder close in on Klose

GERMANY: Bundesliga leaders and Cup-finalists Werder Bremen have signed German international striker Miroslav Klose for next season. **Page 52**

FA leader shot dead

SERBIA: Branko Bulatovic, the general secretary of the Serbia & Montenegro FA, was shot dead outside the association's headquarters in Belgrade in an apparently motiveless attack. **Page 57**

ROME DERBY ABANDONED

ITALY: The 2003-04 season took a turn for the worse when the Rome derby had to be abandoned amid chaotic scenes. **Page 14**

Enyimba reign supreme

NIGERIA: Enyimba confirmed their status as Africa's top club side after beating Etoile Sahel of Tunisia 1-0 in the African Super Cup. **Page 64**

BARCA ON THE BOUNCE

SPAIN: A run of nine straight League wins has put Barcelona into contention in the Liga title race. **Page 18**

Back in business

FRANCE: French football is enjoying an unexpected high, with four teams in the quarter-finals of the European club competitions. **Page 24**

Mourners pack the main stand at Leeds' Elland Road ground to pay their respects before the funeral of John Charles

01/03/04

Barcelona edge out Brondby, coached by former Barça player Michael Laudrup, in the UEFA Cup third round

03/03/04

Valencia beat Besiktas 2-0 to complete a comfortable 5-2 aggregate win in their UEFA Cup encounter

03/03/04

HEADLINERS

AILTON

Brazil-born striker in Qatar storm

WERDER BREMEN'S BRAZILIAN marksman Ailton is a striker who usually makes no detours on his way to goal. But, strangely, he has not shown the same sense of direction in pursuing his dream of international football.

It seems the 30-year-old, whose goals have taken him to the top of the Bundesliga scoring lists this season, just cannot decide whose mast he wants to nail his colours to. One moment, the barrel-chested front-man insists he has not yet given up hope of representing Brazil ("I belong in the *selecao*"); the next, he hints he would like to become a naturalised German and play for the *Nationalmannschaft*; while only last month the astonishing news broke that he and two other Bundesliga-based Brazilians – siblings Dede and Leandro, Borussia Dortmund left-back and midfielder respectively – were negotiating to play for the Qatar national team.

No matter that the trio had no links with the Gulf state. On travelling to Doha to assess the terrain, they would soon discover how serious the Qataris were. In return for their agreement, the players would receive a substantial cash package – Ailton was offered £1million up front, plus £666,000 per year – and would be put on a fast-track to full citizenship within a month.

Under pressure from angry Dortmund management, Dede and Leandro would eventually decline. "It was never a question of money," said Dede. "I had never played for Brazil and thought Qatar might give me the chance to fulfil my dream of playing in the World Cup. However, I didn't want any problems with Dortmund. Playing for Qatar would have meant a conflict of interests."

Ailton, though, was not backing down. He maintained he was not violating FIFA regulations and looked forward to making his first appearance for Qatar in a World Cup qualifier in late March against Jordan.

But his new passport would not be forthcoming. While Qatar had successfully naturalised Bulgarian weightlifter Angel Popov (now Assad Saif Assad) and the Kenya-born 3,000 metre steeplechase runner Stephen Cherono (aka Saif Saeed Shaheen), they would find FIFA boss Sepp Blatter much less supportive of the notion of bespoke nationality.

An emergency FIFA meeting introduced a ruling requiring players to be resident in a country for a minimum of two years before being able to switch nationalities. Ailton was left with the realisation that the only move he would be making was his end-of-season transfer from Werder to Schalke.

It was virtually impossible to find anyone in German football unhappy with the Blatter intervention. Ailton's future boss at Schalke, Jupp Heynckes, said he was glad "this nonsense had been stopped", while Germany coach Rudi Voller claimed justice had been done: "If we had carried on down this road, there would be no more need for national teams. It was not acceptable for a country to buy a squad."

'We don't need players with this legionnaire mentality'

Bayern chief Karl-Heinz Rummenigge

Bayern chief Karl-Heinz Rummenigge also had plenty to offer on the subject. His club had shown interest in buying Dede in the summer but now they were having second thoughts. "If Dede decides to play for Qatar, he can take his name off our list of possible signings. We don't need players with this legionnaire mentality. Personally, the fact he went to Qatar says to me that we should never have anything to do with him."

Nick Bidwell

Against the odds, Auxerre pull off a 1-0 UEFA Cup win over Panathinaikos in Athens

03/03/04

Pele greets players from his 'all-time greats' list at a press conference in London

04/03/04

Three Leicester City players are released on bail after their arrest on sexual assault charges in Spain

05/03/04

Werder Bremen maintain their lead in Germany with a 2-0 win over 1860 Munich

07/03/04

BRANKO BULATOVIC

The general secretary of the Serbia & Montenegro FA was gunned down outside the association's headquarters in Belgrade, and later died in hospital. The assassin, who shot the 53-year-old in the head, escaped from the scene.

GERMAN BURGOS

There have been allegations of match-fixing against Atletico Madrid goalkeeper German Burgos and Celta Vigo. Racing Santander forward Mario Regueiro claimed that Burgos rang him, saying how helpful it would be to his Argentinian friends up in Vigo if Regueiro and his team-mates would allow themselves to lose against Celta (they drew 4-4 in a crazy game, with Savo Milosevic missing a penalty). Burgos admits he rang, but insists he was "only joking".

JERMAIN DEFOE

The Tottenham striker (below, left) impressed on his England debut, the 1-0 friendly defeat by Sweden in Gothenburg. Defoe put his case for inclusion in an England Euro 2004 squad that is unlikely to feature many late entries.

In other matches, Stefano Fiore and Fabrizio Miccoli played well in Italy's 2-1 win over Portugal in Braga, while Fernando Morientes was one of the few bright sparks for Spain, who flattered to deceive while beating Denmark 2-0.

In Rotterdam, Olivier Dacourt impressed for France in a 0-0 draw with Holland.

PETER KENYON

Chelsea chief under fire over Eriksson

OH, TO HAVE been a fly on the wall when Chelsea's chief executive Peter Kenyon explained to the club's owner Roman Abramovich just why Sven Goran Eriksson would not be joining them next season.

Eriksson's widely-publicised decision to sign an extension to his contract with England – "I wanted to kill the speculation and concentrate on Euro 2004" – left Kenyon with some explaining to do.

Kenyon recently began work at Stamford Bridge after completing his gardening leave following his high-profile switch from Manchester United. He was recruited by Abramovich, reportedly with a £3million golden hello and a £1.5m salary, because of his ability to bring big-name signings to Chelsea.

Last month Eriksson was photographed visiting Kenyon's flat, a story that prompted the FA to act to conclude its contract negotiations with the Swede. Kenyon admitted: "I did have informal discussions with Sven Goran Eriksson to talk about his future intentions.

"He made it very clear that he missed the day-to-day challenge of club football but it was also obvious from those discussions that he has enormous loyalty to the England job and to the England players."

Chelsea will now turn their attention to other managerial targets. In private press briefings, Kenyon confirmed the worst-kept secret in English football: that current Chelsea manager Claudio Ranieri will be sacked in the summer. Chelsea also named five possible replacements, one of whom was Eriksson.

That leaves Arsene Wenger, who will not leave Arsenal now that funding is in place for the club's new stadium; Carlo Ancelotti of Milan, Bayern Munich's Ottmar Hitzfeld; and Roma coach Fabio Capello.

John Holmesdale

Deportivo knock Juventus out of the Champions League

09/03/04

Real Madrid ease past Bayern Munich into the Champions League quarter-finals

10/03/04

Newcastle hit four past Mallorca in the UEFA Cup fourth round, first leg at St James' Park

11/03/04

Lyon beat Sochaux to close the gap on French League leaders Monaco

13/03/04

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on Pele's ludicrous best player list...Micky Adams' reaction to La Manga ...humble pie for Alex Ferguson... Blatter good, Blatter bad

"YOU cannot be serious!" You could almost hear the agonised cry of John McEnroe when Pele published his ludicrous list of the 100, going on 125, best living footballers. The height of absurdity was that he nominated, in a pathetic gesture towards political correctness, two women footballers from the USA. This on a list where there was no place for John Charles, still alive when the list was compiled, the peerless, supremely versatile Tom Finney, and even Pele's World Cup-winning team-mate Gerson, who ripped up the list in fury on Brazilian television.

I can still in my mind's eye see the glorious 60-yard pass that Gerson plumped on Pele's chest in the penalty box, enabling him to volley home in Guadalajara during the 1970 World Cup.

There was no place, either, for that powerful right-winger Jairzinho, worthy successor to Julinho and Garrincha, who at the same finals crossed the ball with which Pele was so sure he had beaten Gordon Banks with his header that he was shouting *"Gol!"* an instant before the England keeper, with one flailing hand, turned it over the bar for arguably the greatest save at a World Cup.

I note that the Amazonian Michelle Akers was one of the chosen females. Some years ago it was reported that she was so furious about derogatory remarks I'd made about women's football in *World Soccer* that she wished she could meet me on a football field with a crunching tackle. Since, as a Sunday footballer of the time, my problem was lack of skill rather than size, I wasn't terrified. Indeed, when in 1994, during a reception at the Caesar's Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, I suddenly found myself standing next to her, I was about to tell her her chance had come, but she had her back to me and melted away.

It was my colleague Jeff Powell who, watching the American women's team (including Akers, Mia Hamm and the noisy Brandi Chastain) win the World Cup, said the standard was that of an English club's under-15 team. Gerson, Finney and Charles were a bit better than that.

'The height of absurdity was that Pele nominated two American women in his list of the 100 best living footballers'

WHATEVER the rights, wrongs and realities of the squalid affair of the Leicester City footballers in La Manga, their manager Micky Adams has surely been guilty of special pleading.

Adams protested that neither the Professional Footballers' Association nor the League Managers' Association had backed him and his players sufficiently. Guilty or not, they didn't deserve it.

That Adams offered to resign wasn't surprising. What, after all, ever possessed him to believe that his players, however long in the tooth, could be trusted to behave themselves in the small hours? What happened to the concept of a curfew?

The Leicester boss has hardly been the only one to make strange statements. Even Arsene Wenger, Arsenal's sophisticated manager, joined the chorus of those who – oh dear! – blamed the media for playing things up. PFA chief Gordon Taylor, whose attempt to play down whatever happened in La Manga won him no medals, was another of those who chattered on about the malign role of the media.

But the media didn't, for example, invent the repugnant practice of 'roasting', which led to the multiple ravaging of a hapless teenage girl in London's Grosvenor House hotel last autumn.

Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad players pay tribute to the victims of the Madrid bombings

13/03/04

Milan close in on the Italian championship after a 3-1 victory away to Juventus

14/03/04

Tom Finney has come out to castigate such behaviour by players and blame it on high salaries. They certainly play a huge part, but they interact with the gradual erosion of the old, self-respecting, self-contained working class and the emergence of an underclass with none of the old virtues.

WELL, Alex Ferguson has been forced to eat a large portion of humble pie, backing down after making his unedifying claim for breeding rights worth untold millions in Rock of Gibraltar, a horse for which he never paid a penny. Game, set and match to the Coolmore Mafia, though Ferguson will still make a goodly sum out of what rights he has retained.

Meanwhile, the roof has fallen in on Manchester United, though I still believe they were unlucky to go out to Porto in the Champions League. Paul Scholes, after all, scored a perfectly good second goal in the return leg, which if it had been allowed to stand would have given United a 2-0 lead, putting them ahead on aggregate. It was absurd for some commentators to claim Porto deserved their 1-1 draw. Had they gone 2-0 down, would they ever have recovered?

The botched offside decision against Scholes emphasised the difficulties of applying the law even in its previous, less complex state. Charlton manager Alan Curbishley is so right to deplore the new gloss put on the law. If referees and linesmen cannot even get the most basic offside decisions right, think of the confusion and the chaos that are bound to continue under the new dispensation.

SEPP '51 Bad New Ideas A Day' Blatter cannot always get it wrong, and he was right to bring in a rule that no more than a half-dozen substitutions can be made in friendlies. Sven Goran Eriksson may have protested – he seems to have been doing quite a lot of that of late – but he and his like have reduced friendly after friendly to a virtual fraud on the paying public with their infinite substitutions.

It was good, however, to see the G-14 clubs snub Blatter's utterly redundant Club World Championship, even if it would be played during the European close season. As I've said before, it's astonishing that Alex Ferguson and Manchester United should still be getting flack for deserting the FA Cup, which they held at the time, to play in the ludicrous first version of the competition in Brazil. This when the government, ineffable Sports Minister Tony Banks to the fore, and the FA had been leaning on them so hard to take part for fear England wouldn't – and they didn't – get the hosting rights to the 2006 World Cup.

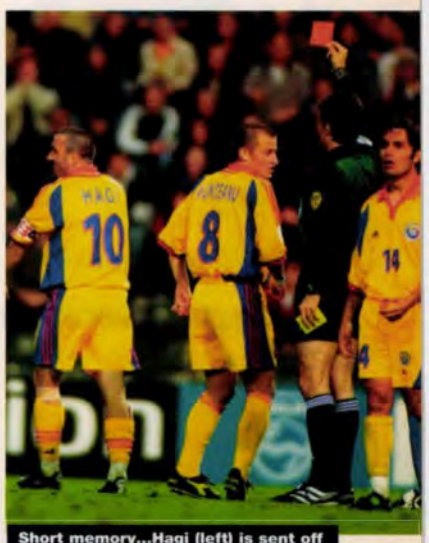
Whether the G-14 clubs' demand that countries pay compensation for international call-ups is a starter is less certain. A sensible compromise, given the power of those clubs, would be to cut down on such idiocies as having the African Nations Cup every two years, having such a bloated South American World Cup qualifying tournament and promoting the Confederations Cup.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

Notes & quotes

"I suspect that all that happened was pre-arranged. In politics, you call it a strategy of tension."
Italian Culture Ministry under-secretary Mario Pescante claims Lazio and Roma supporters colluded to start the riots that led to the abandonment of the Rome derby.

"Everyone knows I like discipline."
Galatasaray's new Romanian coach Gheorghe Hagi conveniently forgets his past as a maverick playmaker who saw the odd card or two.



Short memory...Hagi (left) is sent off

"There was no warning or any other sign that such an act was coming."
Serbian FA general secretary Nikola Jockovic after the Serbia & Montenegro FA general secretary Branko Bulatovic was shot and fatally wounded in Belgrade.

"Bad fans continue to be bad, so we intend to deal with them in a harsh way."
Recently-appointed Greek Sports Minister Giorgos Orphanos declares war on the country's hooligans.

Michael Owen ends his goal drought with two goals against Portsmouth

17/03/04

Real Zaragoza celebrate a thrilling extra-time victory over Real Madrid in the Spanish Cup Final in Barcelona's Olympic stadium

17/03/04

Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand loses his appeal against his ban for failing to attend a drugs test

18/03/04

WS WORLD SOCCER Paul Gardner

Football as a game of chess? I've had enough of this lunacy!

AMONG the barmy thoughts that coaches visit upon we long-suffering followers of the game, there is the one about how football is like a game of chess.

That thought is apparently supposed to fascinate the hell out of everyone and set us all a-tremble with delight. Well, not around here it doesn't. I've seen too many of these 'fascinating tactical chess matches' to buy into that tommyrot. Those games are invariably boring.

Why? The problem, as I see it, is that football does not resemble chess at all. One game is played by two opponents who sit facing each other over a tiny board, the other involves 22 players who charge about all over a pretty large pitch.

But wait – the coaching intellectuals have taken it a step further. They see another similarity. Football is 11 v 11 ...and chess is 16 v 16. Players with various skills make up a football team, while chessmen have different ways of moving about the board. I object – footballers are human beings with minds of their own, while chess pieces are lumps of wood, or ivory, or other dumb stuff.

The coaches will consider my objection to be out of order because it's against the very thing they most admire about chess: they see a game in which one guy has absolute control and makes all the decisions for the movements of a bunch of silently obedient dummies.

Now, what coaching bliss if it worked that way in football – though I have heard of one coach who seems to have achieved that perfection. A couple of years back, I read a report in a Florida newspaper describing a championship win for a local high-school team. The coach said: "It was the discipline instilled in these players. We don't have stars, just a team of 16 obedient, willing players who follow the instructions of their coach."

There you are – the football-chess fusion realised. Sixteen players or chessmen who do what they're told or go where they're pushed.

Enough. I'm in need of a good stiff antidote to this lunacy. I shall follow in Pele's recent footsteps and compose a sort of purity list of players who could never, not in a million years, fit into the chess metaphor. Players who are the exact opposite of lumps of wood and who do what lumps of wood can't, who leave you gasping: "How did he *do* that?"

'I've made my own purity list of players who could never in a million years fit into the chess metaphor'

Pele, of course, all soccer lists start with Pele. That move he pulled on Uruguayan keeper Ladislao Mazurkiewicz in the 1970 World Cup serves as the perfect example of what I'm looking for. Audacity, impudence – and fun.

Diego Maradona, Roberto Rivelino, Stanley Matthews, Garrincha and Johan Cruyff. Players who quickened the pulse of an entire stadium whenever they got the ball. Zinedine Zidane, Thierry Henry and Ronaldo do it today.

I'll pick a few defenders on the basis they made things look so easy, they never seemed to be in a hurry, because they did everything neatly and coolly: Neil Franklin (remember him, anyone?), Franz Beckenbauer, Gaetano Scirea, Elias Figueroa.

When it comes to scoring, everyone will tell you it doesn't matter how goals go in as long as they do. If you're just looking at the scoreline, that's true, but for the purposes of my list, it *does* matter. I'm looking for players who make scoring an art form.

I've already listed some of these guys, but I need to add Romario, who, for me, was the supreme goalscoring artist.

Paraguay's Roberto Cabanas has a special place because he scored the most astounding goal I've ever seen. Playing for New York Cosmos in 1963, he flung himself headfirst to meet a cross. He dived way too early – yet, floating horizontally in mid-air as the ball passed over his back, he flung his legs behind him and hooked the ball into the net with his heel.

Now I realise I have a name for my list – the Football Artists. The supremely-talented royalty of the game. Please, don't ever mention chess to me again.

Bayern Munich draw 1-1 against Hertha Berlin as Werder Bremen extend their lead in the Bundesliga

20/03/04

The Rome derby is abandoned amid dramatic scenes in the Stadio Olimpico

21/03/04

Notes & quotes

"My dad in Mexico? Nah. My dad's sitting on the sofa at home with half his arse hanging out of his trousers, as usual."
Betis winger Joaquin laughs off rumours that his father was in Mexico, talking to Jorge Valdano about becoming Real Madrid's latest *galactico*.

"If we have to make up the rest of the side from the youth team, our youth system has to be the elite of the elite. We can't just go picking up kids who come and knock on our door at the Castellana."
Carlos Queiroz airs his fears about Florentino Perez's 'Zidanes and Pavons' policy.

"The Dutch team should be adapted to my talents. That was what happened in the play-off return against Scotland and the result was good."
No false modesty from Ruud Van Nistelrooy as he tells *Oranje* boss Dick Advocaat how to proceed at Euro 2004.

Are you listening, Dick?...Van Nistelrooy

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Ricardo Carvalho (Porto)
Milito (Zaragoza)
Cole (Arsenal)
Figo (Real Madrid)
Pirlo (Milan)
Kaka (Milan)
Pires (Arsenal)
Ailton (Werder Bremen)
Henry (Arsenal)

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Cisse (Auxerre)

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Pancaro (Milan)
Figo (Real Madrid)
Micoud (Werder Bremen)
Kaka (Milan)
Vicente (Valencia)
Shevchenko (Milan)
Henry (Arsenal)
Pieroni (Mouscron)

FANATIK (TUR)
Lehmann (Arsenal)
Terry (Chelsea)
Maldini (Milan)
Puyol (Barcelona)
Juninho (Lyon)
Micoud (Werder Bremen)
Deco (Porto)
Vicente (Valencia)
Henry (Arsenal)
Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
Shevchenko (Milan)

KICKER (GER)
Casillas (Real Madrid)
Cafu (Milan)
Campbell (Arsenal)
Ricardo Carvalho (Porto)
Deco (Porto)
Kaka (Milan)
Zidane (Real Madrid)
Seedorf (Milan)
Henry (Arsenal)
Shearer (Newcastle)
Drogba (Marseille)

TIPS-BLADET (DEN)
Casillas (Real Madrid)
Toure (Arsenal)
Bordon (Stuttgart)
Bridge (Chelsea)
Micoud (Werder Bremen)
Kaka (Milan)
Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
Vicente (Valencia)
Frei (Rennes)
Henry (Arsenal)
Shevchenko (Milan)

WORLD SOCCER (UK)
Casillas (Real Madrid)
Toure (Arsenal)
Maldini (Milan)
Terry (Chelsea)
Kaka (Milan)
Ronaldinho (Barcelona)
Pirlo (Milan)
Costinha (Porto)
Henry (Arsenal)
Shevchenko (Milan)
Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

Kaka stars for Milan in their 4-1 defeat of Deportivo La Coruna

23/03/04

Porto run up a 2-0 lead in the opening leg of their Champions League quarter-final against Lyon

23/03/04

Chelsea and Arsenal line up at Stamford Bridge before the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final, the first such meeting of English teams in the history of the competition

24/03/04

WS WORLD SOCCER Jim Holden

FIFA's ruling on Qatar won't end the controversy

WHAT a sight it must have been – Sepp Blatter and his FIFA compadres rushing into emergency session to outlaw the move by Gulf state Qatar to buy up players for their national team in just the same way the great clubs of Europe snaffle every high-quality footballer on earth.

Qatar had been poised to take advantage of newly-relaxed eligibility rules that effectively allowed instant naturalisation of players to a country with which they had no previous connection.

The tiny nation has already had success – and provoked huge controversy – with a similar move in athletics. Now they'd set their sights on soccer, offering Werder Bremen striker Ailton, top scorer in the Bundesliga, cash to become a Qatari.

For once, Blatter's fury was understandable – even if there was a certain irony in the situation given his assiduous courting of the world's small nations to bolster his power base.

FIFA's emergency committee was put in session, and it outlawed the instant naturalisation of footballers with immediate effect.

Quite right too. If football between national teams is to continue to mean anything, it is surely imperative that players have some connection to the countries they represent.

I'm not among those, however, with rigid views on nationality. It is quite possible to have honest, heartfelt, long-term dual allegiance to different countries and their soccer teams.

I know – because I do.

Having an English father and a Danish mother, I could have represented either nation had I been talented enough at football. I am keen for both England and Denmark to win their matches. And when they meet in competition, as they did at the 2002 World Cup, I'm in a horrible pickle. I can't lose – but neither can I win.

Soccer's regulations have to allow for sincere dilemmas, and they must also take account of increasingly liberal global nationality laws.

And this is where the problems arise, and where the fine print of FIFA's emergency ruling a few weeks ago still leaves the door very much open to nations 'buying up' players in the way that clubs do.

The devil in the detail was that it will now take just two years' residence for a footballer to be eligible for a new country.

'Arsenal's Edu may be Brazilian but with no caps and more than two years' residence in London he could become English within weeks'

For an oil-rich nation on the make like Qatar that might still allow them to tempt ambitious footballers with bundles of cash.

It could also enable the powerful European elite – England, Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Holland – to adopt footballers to their cause.

Let's take one possible example. England have prospered under the cool guidance of Sven Goran Eriksson, but always appeared at least one player shy of a championship-winning team because there is no natural-born Englishman to select on the left side of midfield.

But, now, even the emergency FIFA rules would allow instant selection of Edu, the left-footed midfielder who has emerged this season as a key component of the outstanding Arsenal team.

Edu may be Brazilian, but with no international caps and more than two years' residence in London, he could theoretically become English within weeks.

And if his sudden appearance in the team was the catalyst for England winning the Euro 2004 crown, would the fans mind?

Critics said supporters would rebel when European club teams became full of foreign stars in the wake of the Bosman ruling in the 1990s – but practice has proved otherwise.

All the fans want is success, and that applies to national teams just as forcefully as clubs.

It's not hard to see how the system could be manipulated by the countries with the richest clubs, many of whom now acquire foreign players as teenagers long before they have played for their national teams.

Edu for England may never happen, nor Ailton for Qatar. But the floodgates are open, and the football world will surge through swiftly enough.

Real Madrid beat Monaco 4-2 in a thrilling Champions League quarter-final first leg at the Bernabeu

24/03/04

Celtic celebrate a famous aggregate victory over Barcelona at Camp Nou

25/03/04

Marseille knock Liverpool out of the UEFA Cup fourth round

25/03/04

Sven Goran Eriksson signs an extension to his England contract

28/03/04

WS Mediawatch

News and views from the world's press. Compiled by Keir Radnedge

Winner...Uli Hoeness

"Uli Hoeness's success in getting UEFA to ban Roberto Carlos from Bayern's return against Real Madrid was rather like the way Jorge Valdano went down at half-time in Seville to have a go at the referee, Iturralde Gonzalez. But while Valdano made a mess of it, Hoeness got Roberto Carlos banned for two games. That Uli, he's still a winner!"
– Marca's *Enrique Marin paying twisted tribute to Uli Hoeness.*

"A club like Schalke should always aim to play entertaining football on an international stage. We need to play much better than we are at the moment. I know we've had injuries but frankly, what we're playing right now is unbelievably bad football."
– Kicker *reports Danish striker Ebbe Sand pulling no punches.*

"What would you do if your wife was caught slinking into another man's apartment? Interrogate her? Divorce her? Shoot her? What is the matter with the Football Association? Are they men or mice? Like desperate, pathetic husbands, they keep offering Sven Goran Eriksson more money to stay with them. How much do the FA want to be humiliated?"
– *the* Daily Mail's *Jeff Powell brings a touch of domesticity to the Eriksson saga.*

"If you or I buy a Ferrari we can't pay for, we go to jail. Yet there are clubs who not only buy Ferraris they can't pay for but also get the prettiest girls. It's not only not fair, it's scandalous. It's hard to imagine the Spanish barring Real Madrid from Europe or the Italians throwing out Roma. UEFA must take the responsibility and I'll be doing my utmost to make that happen.
– Soccer Investor *reports Michel Platini's fears of flaws in the UEFA licence system.*

"To build a national team with passports of convenience is the project in Qatar. As if it were not enough to undermine national pride with commercial concerns. This route for football promises only to be an international cul de sac, a desert trek without a future."
– L'Equipe's *Didier Braun thinking along the same lines as FIFA.*

"When Togo naturalised 13 Brazilians to try to reach the African Nations Cup finals no one in Europe took any notice; when Qatar tried to do the same thing to reach the World Cup finals, Europe went ballistic. Why? Because the big European federations look down at African football but worry about the financial resources in the Gulf. For our clubs to go fishing in the Third World is natural, even big-hearted. But when some outsider tries to turn the established order on its head it's a criminal offence."
– Foot's *Bernard Jeunejean thinks along the same lines as Qatar.*

"No doubts any longer. Juventus have reached the end of an era. The proof came from Spain. Not through a duel with the superstars of Real Madrid but through a defeat by a team [Deportivo] who were hit for eight goals in the first round by Monaco. That said everything."
– Guerin Sportivo *on the black and white truth.*

End of an era...Juventus are beaten by Deportivo

Split personalities

The Rome derby ended in chaos but two golden oldies have been displaying their genius

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

IN A MONTH when Italian football was yet again shaken to its very foundations by tales of economic disaster and fan violence, it comes as no small relief to be able to briefly focus on the unquestionable genius of two Italian golden oldies – 37-year-old Roberto Baggio and 35-year-old Paolo Maldini.

Ironically, and for very different reasons, both of them may yet be called on to make a swansong appearance in the Italian blue shirt. For Baggio, the idea is that he be called up for Italy's April 28 friendly against Spain in Genoa. For Maldini, the business is much more serious since it appears that neither coach Giovanni Trapattoni nor senior players have given up hope of persuading the Milan captain to return for one final fling in the Euro 2004 finals.

The media-driven move to have Baggio recalled for one last symbolic Italian cap gained pace after March 14, the day that he scored his 200th goal in Serie A in Brescia's 2-2 draw at Parma. It says much about Baggio's longevity that his first top-flight goal was scored on a balmy May Sunday in Naples 17 years ago, on the day that Napoli, Diego Maradona et al drew 1-1 with Fiorentina to

● Fabio Capello has done little to dispel rumours that he may be heading for Chelsea as a replacement for Claudio Ranieri. "I'd like to work in England very much. I would like another foreign experience," said Capello, who won the Spanish League title with Real Madrid in 1996.

Thinking ahead...Capello

Unstoppable... Baggio shows that at 37 he can still strike terror into the hearts of Parma defenders

claim a historic first *scudetto*. Napoli needed only a draw to secure the title and therefore only minimal attention was paid when the relatively unknown 20-year-old Baggio scored a late equaliser for Fiorentina with a now trademark, precise free-kick. Little did we know.

Seventeen years on and now in his 22nd season as a professional, Baggio's class remains crystal clear, notwithstanding his dodgy knees and his greying hair. Even if the acceleration over the first 10 yards is no longer that of his heyday, Baggio still showed enough pace to get past three Parma defenders before slotting home a perfectly-placed shot for a late equaliser. All that remained was for the crowd at Parma's Tardini stadium to rise and offer the Little Prince a much-deserved standing ovation.

Baggio's tug of war

When Baggio met the media after the game, one all-too-obvious question hung heavily in the air. For how much longer does he intend to defy the years and keep on playing? Earlier this year, he appeared to accept the inevitable when announcing that this would, reluctantly, be his last season. In the wake of his current sparkling form, was he tempted to reconsider?

"No," he replied. "Unfortunately, I think this will be my last season, even if just at the moment there is a terrible struggle going on inside me between my love of the game and the suffering and pain that comes from knees that have seen six major operations and that let me know about it a fair bit.

"It will be very hard to retire even allowing for all my aches and pains. I'll take a lot of time off, go hunting in Argentina and do a number of things that I haven't had time to do. Mind you, sooner or later the old yearning for football will return."

If and when he does retire, Baggio's remarkable career, for all its longevity, will seem strangely incomplete. He did, of course, win League titles with Juventus (1995) and Milan (1996), yet he never featured in a Champions League-winning side. Likewise, despite scoring 27 goals in 55 games for Italy, his international career will probably be best remembered for the penalty miss in the 1994 World Cup Final shoot-out that meant Italy lost to Brazil. For all that, though, Baggio has earned his place in football's hall of fame.

While the Little Prince's one-match recall will come in an exclusively sentimental context, the same clearly does not apply to Maldini. He has been in outstanding form this season with League leaders and champions-elect Milan, while Italy's current first-choice central defenders, Alessandro Nesta and Fabio Cannavaro, have had injury problems. So it was hardly surprising to hear coach Trapattoni say in late March: "I spoke to Maldini five months ago and he knows that we have a date fixed for another chat. But I'm not going to tell you anything else, otherwise if we keep on talking about this, we'll just annoy him."

Officially, there seems little reason why Maldini should renege on his decision to abandon international football in the wake of Italy's disappointing 2002 World Cup finals campaign. Yet, during recent interviews with *World Soccer*, both Maldini's club-mate Nesta and Italy captain Cannavaro admitted to having recently tried to persuade the 35-year-old to come out of international retirement, just for the Euro 2004 finals. Watch this space.

Muscle-flexing protest

If Baggio and Maldini represent the healthy face of Italian football, we had a very clear reminder of the unacceptable side on the night of the season's second Rome derby. Two minutes into the second half of the Lazio-Roma clash, smoke flares were lobbed on to the pitch. Within seconds, much of the Olimpico pitch was shrouded in heavy smoke, making it impossible for play to carry on.

At first, it seemed likely referee Roberto Rosetti would wait a minute or two for the smoke to clear and then resume play. Not so. As the flares continued to be thrown, it became obvious that, for whatever reason, sections of the Roma fans were determined to stop the game.

Soon, one or two of the self-appointed fan 'leaders' appeared at the edge of the pitch, determined to talk to Roma captain Francesco Totti. In a surreal scene it was explained to Totti that if the match continued, the fans would invade the pitch, forcing it to be abandoned in any case.

The fans told Totti their protest had been prompted by the killing of a child, a Roma fan, allegedly run over by a police vehicle during minor skirmishes with fans before the game. It later transpired that this story was a total lie, fabricated in order to stage a muscle-flexing protest.

Very quickly, however, the rumour of the child's death caught on like wildfire. Not even seven different denials over the public address system could convince the sceptical fans.

TV viewers all round the world then witnessed something that may well be without precedent. Having spoken with the Roma fan leaders at the *Curva Sud*, Totti then returned to the middle of the pitch where he was seen and heard to say, among other things, "if

'If we carry on playing now they will kill us'

Roma's Francesco Totti explains the mood of the fans to the referee and fellow players during the derby

No smoke without fire...referee Roberto Rosetti calls a halt to the Roma-Lazio clash

we play now, they'll kill us". Faced with the threat of a pitch invasion from the Roma fans (who by this stage even had the support of their Lazio counterparts, notwithstanding a normally robust, mutual loathing), Totti consulted with Rosetti, team-mates and opponents alike, urging that the game be postponed.

At this point, Rosetti was in the hot spot. On the one hand, a majority of the players and staff from both clubs were unwilling to play on; on the other hand, Achille Serra, Rome's senior police officer, was adamant that in the interests of public order the game should go on.

In the end, after consulting via mobile phone with Football League president Adriano Galliani, Rosetti decided to pull the plug, abandoning the match. Fan power had won out. Fan violence, too, then had its moment as elements in the Roma and Lazio camps made common cause in a series of running battles with riot police outside the ground. By the end of the night, 174 fans and police had been injured, while 36 fans had been either arrested or summonsed.

Unanswered questions

A judicial investigation is already under way into the mysterious events of the Olimpico. For the time being, the questions are plenty, the answers few. For a start, given that the protest was clearly not spontaneous but pre-planned, what did the fans' leaders want? A show of strength, aimed at consolidating their dubious links (re tickets, travel concessions and merchandising) with the clubs?

Or was it, as Labour Minister Roberto Maroni suggested next day, a less than subtle blackmail, aimed at coercing the government into helping Italian football out of its current financial chaos? Certainly, the federation's subsequent disciplinary ruling, banning Roma from the Olimpico for one match and fining Lazio £37,000, hardly seemed like a draconian punishment.

If what Maroni suspected was true then it failed. After initially promising to introduce a government decree that would offer special terms (especially in relation to sums owed by clubs to the Inland Revenue), Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi had to back down in the face of widespread opposition to a move that, at a time of slow economic growth and nine per cent unemployment, was simply politically unacceptable.

All of which leaves Italian football in difficulty since no less an authority than Football Federation president Franco Carraro claims that 60 per cent of Serie A and Serie B clubs currently do not meet the economic criteria necessary for re-enrolment in next season's League. While clubs like Roma, Lazio and Parma are still anxiously waiting for an Abramovich-style sugar daddy to walk around the corner and save their bacon, the federation wants to implement a series of measures intended at forcing those clubs in difficulty to adopt the path of fiscal righteousness.

The so-called *Lodo Petrucci* may see clubs in chronic financial difficulty (debts to both the taxman and to players) being both forcibly relegated and at the same time obliged to release all their players. Given the legal impossibility of imposing a wage cap on bigger clubs, the federation is considering measures that would limit the transfer market manoeuvres of heavily indebted clubs by allowing them only to sell, not buy players.

At the moment, it is estimated that more than £350 million must be found in order to straighten the books of at least six Serie A clubs (Roma, Lazio, Parma, Chievo, Perugia and Ancona) in order for them to enrol for next season. All of these issues are due to come before the federation council in mid-April.

In the meantime, the federation believes it will have no trouble convincing UEFA that those Italian clubs wishing to compete in European competitions next season have put themselves (or are putting themselves) on a sound financial footing. We shall see.

'174 fans and police were injured, while 36 fans were arrested or summonsed'

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Wins flood in for Barca

A run of nine League victories has put Frank Rijkaard's men back in title contention

SID LOWE
in Madrid

ONLY MOTHER NATURE herself could stop Barcelona. A run of nine straight League victories, equalling a club record, was finally halted in Seville – not by the home team, Real Betis, but by a bout of freak weather.

Torrential rain left the Manuel Ruiz de Lopera stadium pitch unplayable – though Ronaldinho entertained himself by diving about in its colossal puddles – forcing referee Lizondo Cortes to postpone the match.

Even if, the dizzying momentum broken, Barça's brilliant run should come to an end in rather more normal circumstances in the coming weeks, they have enjoyed a quite incredible turnaround.

Barcelona started the season poorly, the hope and expectation that came with Joan Laporta's summer election as president quickly evaporating. At the turn of the year, they found themselves 12th, 18 points off leaders Real Madrid. But by the end of March, Frank Rijkaard's side had hauled themselves into the title race, having clawed back nine points on their great rivals and with that rescheduled game at Betis in hand.

Barça are La Liga's in-form side of 2004, having taken 28 points from their first 10 games of the year. A win against Betis would leave them only six points behind Madrid and with a visit to the Bernabeu to come. Some urge caution, but tails are up in Barcelona. "If we can win in Madrid, we can win the League," said midfielder Gerard.

Nor has Barça's run been easy, either. Their nine-game winning sequence included victories at notoriously tough Sevilla and Osasuna as well as at the Mestalla against Valencia and at the Riazor against Deportivo La Coruna in a sensational, heart-stopping match that finished 3-2. They also beat Real Sociedad and then-flying Atletico Madrid 3-1 at Camp Nou. The other victories came against Albacete (5-0), Murcia (2-0) and Mallorca (3-2; their

Splashing time ...staff sweep surface water off the Betis pitch but their efforts were not enough to prevent the game against Barça being postponed

opponents scored twice in the last few minutes to disguise Barca's dominance).

The smart title money is, of course, still on Real Madrid or second-placed Valencia, a single point behind, but at Barcelona anything seems possible right now – especially since they boast the outrageous brilliance of Ronaldinho. He it was who racked up their ninth victory, against Sociedad, capping an incredible performance on his 24th birthday in front of his emotional mother with a magnificent, last-minute free-kick.

Ronaldinho means so much to Barcelona – as leader, a footballer, idol and team-mate. He is for ever encouraging, the last off the field after applauding the fans, and a simply amazing talent. He is, wrote one columnist, "a midfielder, defender and striker, a goalscorer and a joy to watch – his goals have that air of magic. He is a kind of conjuror who one of these days is going to take a corner and head it in himself."

The suggestion isn't quite as absurd as it sounds, as anyone who witnessed Ronaldinho's genius against Brondby in the UEFA Cup would testify. The Brazilian thumped a curling free-kick against the bar from the right-hand side of the penalty area, dashed across to the left to collect his own rebound, beat his man and crashed the ball into the net.

No wonder some Catalans are gloating that Real Madrid got the short straw in the summer. Not just the Catalans, either. One Madrid-based columnist wrote: "[Real president] Florentino Perez should remember the conversations he had with the Paris Saint-Germain president in the summer. Madrid had already signed Beckham [because] Ronaldinho sold fewer shirts. Perez wanted the Brazilian to wait another year. What a crass error."

Pitbull bares his teeth

But while Ronaldinho is the most loveable, wonderful footballer to watch, with a childlike joy about everything he does, Barcelona owe their revival as much to their somewhat less aesthetically pleasing winter transfer signing – battling midfielder Edgar Davids, on loan from Juventus. For it is the Dutchman who has proven the catalyst. He has not lost a League match in a Barça shirt. Not bad for a player who Madrid's sporting director Jorge Valdano dismissed as "not a *galactico*" (despite being exactly the kind of player Madrid could do with); a man who ex-Madrid winger Michel sniped was a footballer on the way down who wouldn't bring anything to Barça.

Far from it. Inevitably for someone nicknamed the Pitbull, Davids' arrival has brought bite and competitiveness to central midfield, where Barça were vulnerable, as well as serving to protect the back four, led by Carles Puyol. He is what the Spanish call the 'lungs' of the side, working to keep his team-mates ticking over, breathing life into all around him.

But, curiously, Davids' presence has been felt most further up the pitch. Primarily because his arrival has allowed Rijkaard to make a tactical switch, pushing Ronaldinho, nominally playing on the left, right up front alongside Javier Saviola, and encouraging right-winger Luis Garcia forward. Higher up and freer, Ronaldinho is even more decisive. Equally, the stability Davids provides – normally with the help of Philip Cocu – means that Xavi is finally becoming the footballer that the staff at Barcelona's Masia academy always knew he could be.

A clever, tidy player, Xavi nonetheless too often flattered to deceive in central midfield. Now, liberated from the grafter's jobs and more attacking, his neat vision, excellent delivery and clever angled passing are finally producing results. Barça's win over Depor was a case in point: Xavi's corner created the first goal for Ronaldinho, and a superb, slick interchange with Giovanni Van Bronckhorst created a fantastic second for Saviola soon after.

That slick movement and pace up front, facilitated by Davids' coverage and his ability to win the ball and distribute quickly, as well as Ronaldinho's more advanced position, hints at the other key to Barça's revival. Talented and elegant though Patrick Kluivert may be, the team's improvement has coincided with his absence.

The Dutchman's style is too self-consciously clever, too elegant, far too slow – in contrast to the running of Saviola, Luis Garcia and Ronaldinho that has sent Barça on their quite magnificent run. Although Kluivert can score great goals, he is not the predator the fans want, it just isn't in his nature. He needs too many chances to score too few goals, while Barça are becoming more effective, even though most fans still believe they lack an out-and-out goalscorer.

Laporta's first choice, like that of just about every other wish-list-compiling president, was Thierry Henry, but Barcelona seem now to have settled on a concerted bid for David Trezeguet. It is a measure of the Catalans' improvement that, according to reports, the Juventus forward would be interested.

No wonder Camp Nou is filling again, no wonder Barça are desperate to get Davids on board permanently. And, with the Barça-supporting Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero winning the general election, ousting Real Madrid-supporting Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, Catalans joke that things can only get better.

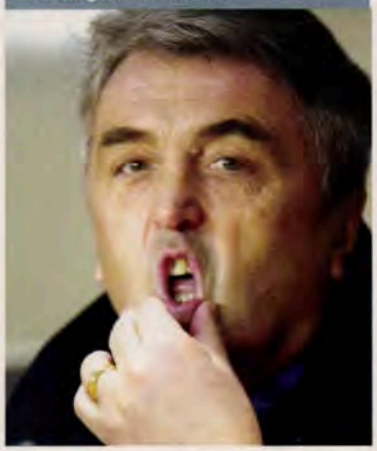
'While Ronaldinho is wonderful to watch, the battling Edgar Davids has proved the catalyst'

● Raddy Antic has resigned as coach of Celta Vigo, just weeks after taking over in an attempt to save them from relegation, following a series of defeats. "I feel overwhelmed by the situation, I don't have the strength to carry on and it's very tough to suffer these setbacks week after week," he said.

Suggestions that Antic had lost his players' respect seemed to be confirmed when full-back Juanfran said: "Antic only came for the Champions League [Celta lost to Arsenal in the second round]. He's not interested in rescuing us – you can't just walk out because things get difficult."

Antic, desperate to jump a sinking ship, insisted his decision had "nothing whatsoever" to do with reported interest from Tottenham.

Feeling the heat...Antic



Mourinho makes his mark

Bobby Robson's former translator has built a fearsome reputation in less than three seasons at Porto

PEDRO PINTO
in Lisbon

NUMBERS DON'T LIE, and FC Porto's statistics tell a tale of dominance, both at home and abroad. Presently, they are one of the best clubs in the world, having risen to prominence under the guidance of two men with one thing in common: the will to win.

No one likes to lose, but I have not come across too many people in my life who detest it as much as Porto president Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa and coach Jose Mourinho.

Playing in a League ridden with mediocrity, the dragons of the north have conquered all before them, scoring goal after goal with their exciting brand of attacking football. Such supremacy could have caused complacency; instead, it has served as fuel for a team who want more victories and more trophies.

By the middle of March, the numbers were intimidating: 26 matches in the Portuguese Superliga, 21 wins and five draws. As they romp to a second consecutive title, Porto have made a haven at home – Das Antas until mid-season, when they moved into the new Dragao stadium – where they have an enviable record of 29 straight victories, dating back to last season. Overall, this term, they

Kings of the road ...Porto keeper Vitor Baia and his team-mates salute their fans at Old Trafford after beating Man United in the Champions League

have lost only twice in 40 matches: to Milan in the European Supercup and Real Madrid in the Champions League, on October 1. No wonder most of Europe's top clubs have been knocking on Mourinho's door. But so far they have received no answer from a man with strong ties to his club president, who has always believed in him.

Mourinho's story is a strange one. After a short stint as assistant manager with lowly Estrela Amadora, he was hired as a part-translator, part-coach by Sporting Lisbon in 1994. One of his tasks was to help Bobby Robson settle in after the Englishman had signed with the Lions; Mourinho impressed the experienced manager so much with his knowledge of the game, that when Robson moved to Porto, he took Mourinho along. Together, they won two League titles and then captured more trophies at Barcelona.

Going it alone

Mourinho's apprenticeship was completed with a season working alongside Louis Van Gaal at Camp Nou; then it was time to go it alone. He jumped at the chance when invited to manage Benfica in 2000, but soon after his arrival a rift with new president Manuel Vilarinho spelt the end of his tenure. Mourinho found a new job at Uniao Leiria, a previously underachieving club but one that soon found their way under their new coach and reached their highest-ever League position of fifth at the end of the 2000-01 season.

However, Mourinho's methods had attracted the interest of Porto, who lured him further north in January 2002 with an ambitious project presented by the most charismatic man in Portuguese football, Pinto da Costa. The rest, as they say, is history. One League title (soon to be two), one Portuguese Cup, one UEFA Cup and surely more silverware to come.

Mourinho, relatively young at 41, has proven he is wise beyond his years. He is not only a tactician, but also a leader. Porto were fiercely criticised by Sir Alex Ferguson for their play-acting antics during the 2-1 home Champions League victory over Manchester United in February. But not only did Mourinho refuse to answer the jibes and get into mind games with the Scot, he also declared he had great respect for Ferguson and was looking forward to the return match at Old Trafford.

Refusing to heighten the pre-match anxiety in the dressing-room with off-the-field affairs, Mourinho instead chose to concentrate on what would happen on it. This action surely served as an example to his side, who showed incredible poise in eliminating United by hitting a late equaliser in the second leg.

The scorer, Costinha, was man of the match in Manchester and has been the unsung hero for Porto all season. The midfield stalwart plays right in front of the back four and is the first line of defence for a side who depend on him to set the tempo of a game. But while Costinha essentially plays a holding role, concentrating on tackling, he will also push forward in order to inspire his midfield colleagues to attack the opposition goal. He creates the necessary space for Deco, Maniche and Dmitri Alenichev to support Benni McCarthy or Edgaras Jankauskas up front. In addition, Costinha commands the troops on the pitch, alongside captain Jorge Costa. Portugal manager Luiz Felipe Scolari has already declared his admiration for the Porto anchorman, so expect him to feature prominently during Euro 2004 this summer.

Are Porto ready to conquer Europe? It may be a bit too soon. The club do not have the financial force and consequently the squad depth of some of their rivals in the Champions League. But if it comes down to who wants it more, don't bet against this team, for they can surprise you. Just ask Lazio, Panathinaikos, Celtic, Marseille, Manchester United and Lyon. All clubs who in the past two seasons have felt the sting of defeat against the Portuguese champions.

'Mourinho has proved that he is a leader as well as a tactician'

● With Porto running away with the title, Sporting Lisbon saw their slim championship hopes end after a surprise 4-0 defeat at Rio Ave, a club suddenly contending for a European place.

It was the Lions of Lisbon's first defeat in 19 matches but left them having to concentrate on securing second place to ensure entry to the Champions League qualifying rounds next season.

However, Benfica might still have a word to say about that. Jose Antonio Camacho's side have improved of late and could still challenge their local rivals. The Eagles could also win their first domestic trophy in seven years, after reaching the Cup Final with a 3-1 win over Belenenses.

Croat striker Tomo Sokota, who will represent his country at this summer's European Championship, scored twice in two minutes to set up a Final encounter with Porto.

Double strike...Tomo Sokota

Beat that!

Arsenal's blistering success leaves their rivals trailing

GAVIN HAMILTON in London

BY DRAWING 1-1 WITH Manchester United at Highbury on March 28, Arsenal set a new record for an unbeaten run since the start of an English League campaign, their 30-game sequence eclipsing the mark set by Leeds (1973-74) and Liverpool (1987-88).

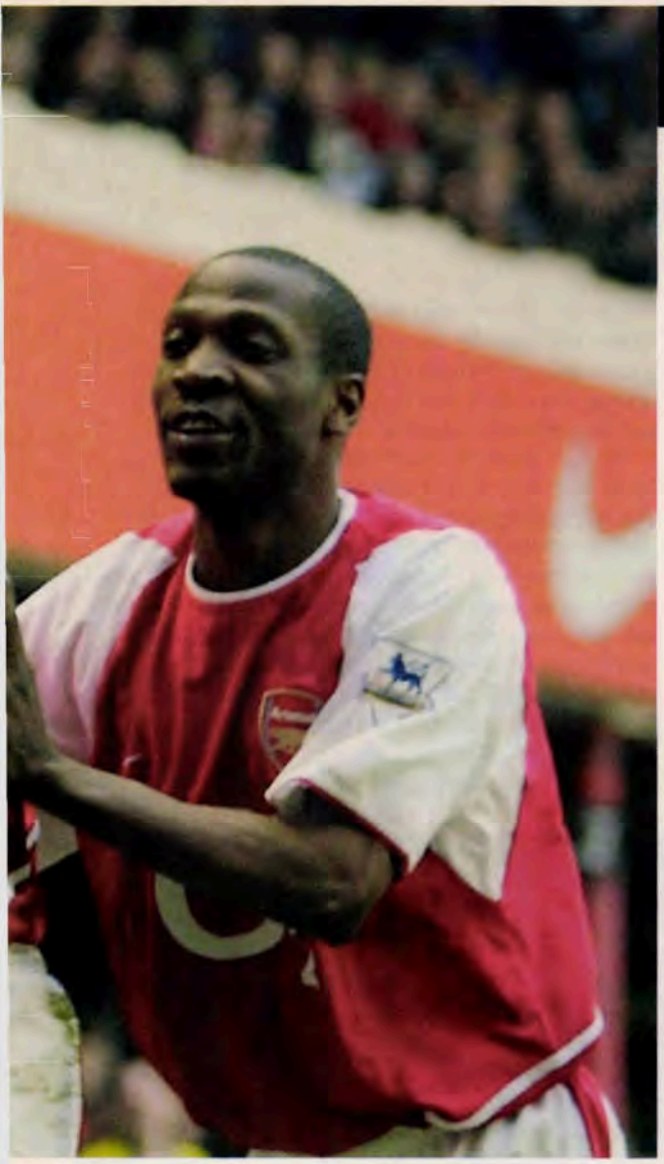
After the game, United manager Alex Ferguson conceded that the title was beyond his side and Chelsea. "I think they [Arsenal] will go on and win the League now. I'm sure of that," he said. "They're playing with great determination, a very strong team."

Despite few personnel changes in the summer, Arsenal have been in imperious form. Kolo Toure, at centre-back, and Edu, a central midfield partner for Patrick Vieira, have been revelations, while the return of Freddie Ljungberg from injury has given the attack added impetus.

But the key figure has been striker Thierry Henry, a player who has no equal in world football at the moment. The Frenchman's potent mix of ferocious pace and stunning technique makes him virtually unstoppable. Barring disaster at Euro 2004, he should collect the end-of-year individual accolades.

Off the field, funding for the new stadium at Ashburton Grove, half a mile from Highbury, has been confirmed, which means that manager Arsene Wenger will not be prised away by Chelsea or Real Madrid.

The Gunners' supremacy has severe implications for their nearest challengers, Chelsea and Manchester United. Chelsea have quickly discovered that money cannot buy success and that it certainly does not buy respect. When Roman Abramovich brought his petro-millions to west London last summer, he inherited Claudio Ranieri as coach, even though it was apparent that he wanted a



Top Guns...Robert Pires and Lauren join Thierry Henry in celebrating another Arsenal goal

coach more in tune with his ambitious thinking. The dignified response of Ranieri to the season-long threat of the sack has been in stark contrast to the Chelsea regime under former Manchester United chief executive Peter Kenyon. Chelsea's senior directors have been briefing against Ranieri in the media, actively encouraging speculation about summer replacements.

The derisive reaction to Chelsea's treatment of Ranieri appears to have been a decisive factor in Sven Goran Eriksson's decision to commit himself to coach England until 2008. The Swede, who was photographed last month entering Kenyon's London flat for a clandestine meeting, realised he would be pilloried by the public were he to jump ship to Chelsea.

So the club are no nearer finding a successor to Ranieri, who was the right man at the wrong time for Chelsea. The Italian's talent for nurturing young players in the long term would be better suited to somewhere like Tottenham, where he may yet end up.

How Manchester United must wish they had Chelsea's problems! Arsenal's progress this season and a host of difficulties of their own making left last season's champions trailing in the League, out of the Champions League at the first knockout hurdle, and chasing the FA Cup as consolation.

By United's high standards, it has been a miserable season.

'For the foreseeable future, the balance of power in English football has shifted south'

Many reasons have been put forward to explain their decline, not least the off-pitch distraction of Alex Ferguson's now resolved dispute with United's biggest shareholder, John Magnier, over the breeding rights to the racehorse Rock of Gibraltar. Then there was the Rio Ferdinand affair and the lack of coaching assistance for Ferguson following Carlos Queiroz's move to Real Madrid.

All of the above are relevant, but the simple fact of the matter is that United do not have the quality in their squad to match that of Arsenal or Chelsea.

Ferdinand's ban exposed United's failure to invest in an experienced centre-back last summer, when Ferguson made a series of modest signings with the cash raised from the sale of David Beckham to Real Madrid. None of the new men has made a big enough impact this season. The best of them, goalkeeper Tim Howard, was responsible for the mistake that resulted in Porto's goal at Old Trafford which sealed United's Champions League fate.

The painful, inescapable truth for Ferguson is that United have missed Beckham. Last summer's sale of the England captain and Juan Sebastian Veron left them with few creative options in midfield. Seven different players have been tried in Beckham's old position on the right side of midfield, and Ferguson appears to be no nearer resolving the situation. Things might have been different had United won the battle with Barcelona for the signature of Ronaldinho, but they have since also lost out to Chelsea's higher offer for Dutch youngster Arjen Robben.

Ferguson was forced to concede defeat to Magnier and the United board over his new contract, which is now a rolling 12-month deal. His problems have been compounded by poor health; it was revealed he was fitted with a heart pacemaker in the week before the Porto defeat.

The United board are prepared to bankroll another rebuilding process this summer, but whether Ferguson is around to oversee it remains to be seen.

Whatever, for the foreseeable future the balance of power in English football has shifted south to London.

In the frame...Wright-Phillips

● Sean Wright-Phillips, son of ex-England striker Ian Wright, was a surprise inclusion by England coach Sven Goran Eriksson in his squad for the friendly against Sweden. The Manchester City winger was joined by Celtic midfielder Alan Thompson, Aston Villa full-back Jlloyd Samuel, Tottenham striker Jermain Defoe and Norwich keeper Robert Green. It was the last chance for Euro 2004 hopefuls to impress Eriksson before he assembles his finals squad.

Back in business

The slowdown in the transfer market has helped French clubs make unexpected progress in Europe

ERIK BIELDERMAN in Paris

MICHEL PLATINI IS a little optimistic. A few weeks ago he gave an interview to *L'Equipe* expressing his belief that a French club could soon win a European trophy. He was not referring to the Champions League, which remains an impossible target, but feels strongly that the UEFA Cup is within reach.

"We are still struggling against the top European clubs because of our lack of financial power, which doesn't allow us to keep our best players," he said. "But this is not so much of a problem when you look at the quality of the UEFA Cup. French teams don't have to have a complex about the quality of the opponents. Of course, big teams like Valencia and Inter are competing, but our clubs have progressed over the years. It seems that the gap created by the Bosman rule has narrowed."

It may be stretching it a bit to envisage either of France's two surviving UEFA Cup candidates actually lifting the trophy this season, since even to get through the quarter-finals they would need to beat the two teams Platini mentioned (Bordeaux play Valencia; Marseille play Inter). As for the Champions League, Monaco (4-2 down after the quarter-final first leg against Real Madrid) and Lyon (2-0 down to FC Porto) looked destined for a last-eight exit as we went to press. But the point is that the foursome are in the quarter-finals at all.

Although Real Madrid and Chelsea have followed a very aggressive transfer policy, most of the major European clubs were very quiet last summer, and that has helped the top French sides. Jean-Michel Aulas, chairman of Lyon, France's richest club and champions for the past two seasons, says: "We still can't compete in the market with the top guns from England, Spain and Italy, but we have been able at least to maintain our squad. Few foreign clubs have invested in new players, so our coach, Paul Le Guen, has been able to work with the same group of players."

Le Guen concurs, saying: "It helps. I have even been able to rotate the squad and rest players like [Eric] Carriere and [Vikash] Dhorasoo, which would have been quite impossible last year."

European stage...Lyon (in red) take on FC Porto in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final

Monaco also held on to their best players last summer. "It was a major boost for me to be able to work with the same players for the third season in a row," says coach Didier Deschamps. "Tactically, the team have been much more efficient."

The Monte Carlo side have benefited, too, from the emergence of young French players such as Sebastien Squillaci, Julien Rodriguez and Patrice Evra, three defenders with international qualities.

The breakdown of the international transfer market has meant that French clubs can even afford to sign world-class players, something that has not happened for years. Lyon, who were struggling to score at the start of the season after the departure of Sonny Anderson to Villarreal, took the chance to sign Giovane Elber from Bayern Munich. Meanwhile, Monaco, weakened by an injury to Shabani Nonda, brought in Fernando Morientes from Real Madrid.

"It was hard to leave Madrid," Morientes says, "but here I found what I was looking for: the chance to play football for a young and determined team competing for titles." Not to mention the tax-free wages and the lifestyle in Monte Carlo…

Marseille took a golden opportunity of a different sort, snapping up France goalkeeper Fabien Barthez on loan from Manchester United. Although he is not the player he was, he has performed well in the crucial games. Barthez played a major part in helping Marseille secure a 1-1 draw away to Liverpool in the UEFA Cup which put them into the last eight.

The new format of the Champions League has also been beneficial to French clubs. In the past six years, no French side has reached the quarter-finals, the second group stage proving too much. This term, Lyon and Monaco made it after negotiating the single, two-leg second round tie. As Deschamps points out: "Our squads are not deep enough compared to the top teams. When it comes to the big games we can't compete on a long-term basis. We need miracles to get through the knockout stages, but if it had been another group phase, we would not have a single chance."

'It was a major boost to be able to work with the same players for the third season in a row'

Monaco coach Didier Deschamps

Although the four French sides still in Europe at the start of April were all up against it in their forthcoming ties, their very presence suggests that after a decade of traumatic continental defeats, French football is starting to shed its inferiority complex.

This season, thanks to a combination of good young players, high-quality technical staff and the slowdown in the transfer market, the leading French clubs have been able to show how good the country's football still can be. In the summer at least one mass exodus is pencilled in, with Auxerre set to lose the likes of Djibril Cisse, Jean-Alain Boumsong, Philippe Mexes and Olivier Kapo to foreign clubs. If the other leading French sides can ensure that Auxerre are the exception rather than the rule, perhaps Platini's view that the French can soon get their hands on European silverware will not seem so far-fetched.

First among equals

Of all the superstars at Madrid, one man stands alone as the very best. By Sid Lowe

NOT FOR THE first time, there was David Beckham on a tabloid front cover, immersed in a passionate embrace, his hands lovingly around his partner's face, his eyes closed, his lips puckered.

And yet his wife Victoria was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the object of Beckham's desire was the most galactic of his *galactico* team-mates. "Passion for Ronaldo," ran the huge headline, and no wonder. The Brazilian had come back from injury and, as if by magic, the storm clouds over Real Madrid had disappeared.

Ronaldo had just helped Madrid to a 4-2 victory over Monaco in the Champions League quarter-final first leg and they would go on to thrash Sevilla 5-1 the following weekend, with the Brazilian scoring twice.

The second of those strikes spoke volumes about his devastating ability in front of goal, his utter, utter reliability: clean through, one-on-one against goalkeeper Esteban with all the time in the world, everyone knew Ronaldo would score. It was just a question of when. Looking into Esteban's eyes, the Brazilian waited, and waited, and waited...and then shot a glance to his left, rolling the ball into the other corner, before running off with that trademark grin.

It is impossible not to love Ronaldo. He may be a little large for a professional athlete, the subject of Catalan daily *Sport's* self-assembly dress-the-Ronaldo doll with tanga, Bermuda shorts and the obligatory 'flab-fighting' corset, but it hardly matters.

He may not be the explosive, insultingly brilliant footballer he was at Barcelona back in 1996-97, but he is every bit as decisive. In fact, more so – he is cleverer, sharper and just as quick when it really matters. A murmur races round the Bernabeu every time he gets the ball. He doesn't train that hard, but why should he when the results are so spectacular already, when his talent is so natural? He may have a taste for the finer things in life, but who cares when he always, always does the business on the pitch?

King of the photo-shoots

Ronaldo has a wonderful honesty about him, an attitude of 'why worry?'. He doesn't pretend to be anything he is not; he is a laugher and a joker, as laid-back as they come. He has been the subject of a million absurd photo-shoots, from Viking warrior to chef and spaceman, via a boxer, flamenco dancer and a Paul Newman sharpshooter. Not because he especially wants to, but because, well, why not?

Why not, indeed? After all, even among the superstars of Real Madrid Ronaldo stands out. People sniped when he won the FIFA World Player award for 2002, but they seemed to forget that he was the World Cup's top scorer on eight goals – more than any top scorer since Gerd Muller in 1970.

Last season, Ronaldo struggled to get going for Madrid, but finally came alive when it really counted, scoring 30 goals, 23 in the League. Statistics in *Don Balon* magazine showed that he was Madrid's most decisive player. It was his vital goals in the final two months that won the League, he scored a magnificent hat-trick against Manchester United at Old Trafford in the Champions League, and when Madrid were knocked out of the competition by Juventus he was injured. Coincidence? Hardly.

Just ask Madrid's current squad. At the start of the season, Ronaldo promised 35 goals. True to his word, he had scored 31 by the end of March, 24 in the League. He leads the ESM Golden Shoe chart and looks utterly unstoppable. Nor has he got his goals in occasional bouts of gluttony: Ronaldo is a consistent contributor. He is Madrid's most important player, his performances – along with those of goalkeeper Iker Casillas – consistently earning results the *galacticos* barely deserve.

When he suffered a muscle injury against Racing Santander, Madrid went on a four-game run without a victory, including a crunching 4-2 defeat at Athletic Bilbao. They lost the Spanish Cup Final to Zaragoza, 3-2 after extra-time, and allowed Valencia to cut their eight-point League lead to just one. They looked shattered, physically and mentally. Beckham, in particular, had suffered a serious dip in fitness and form.

However, it was the defence, as ever, that took the blame. And there were also serious questions asked about Carlos Queiroz's handling of his squad. He was attacked – especially in *AS*, the paper closest to president Florentino Perez – for not rotating his squad, for always fielding the same 11 players and for not trusting in Madrid's *cantera*, their home-grown footballers.

Show must go on

What they failed to see was that Queiroz's hands were tied, a product of Perez's 'Zidanes and Pavons' policy – his insistence on putting together a side made up of youth-teamers and superstars. Queiroz does not trust in Madrid's youth teamers because they do not appear to be good enough, he does not rotate because his squad is absurdly short and because at Madrid the show, and the stars, must go on.

Madrid appeared to be in crisis, which just served to demonstrate once again the incredible power of Ronaldo. As soon as he returned things were back to normal – two victories and nine goals in two games.

But it's not just about the goals. Ronaldo also alters the balance. With Raul as the only man up front, and for ever drifting back into midfield, Madrid have no real targets. "Ronaldo is our reference point," said Michel Salgado. Without him, Madrid are unable to mix up their play or provide any real thrust or penetration.

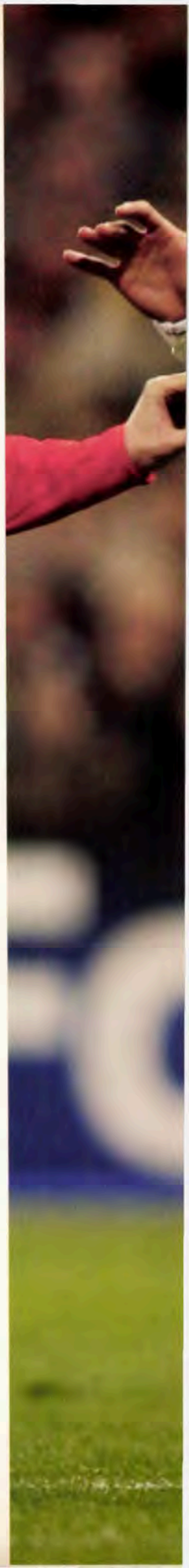
"Raul doesn't play right up the top; he played there [during the four games without a win] and did well, but we had been playing a different way for a year and a half," Ronaldo explained. "When we make changes we have problems."

The Brazilian insisted that Madrid "don't depend on me", but he convinced no one. Such is his enormous influence, calm reliability, the never-let-them-down quality of his presence that his injury seemed to throw his team-mates into a kind of mental crisis, an attack of anxiety.

No wonder the front cover of *AS* on the day Ronaldo returned read: "Ronnie to the rescue." It may have seemed desperate, but it was spot on: Ronaldo brought a smile back, infusing his team and the fans with confidence. Nobody else can match him. Ronnie to the rescue, indeed.

FACT FILE

Club Real Madrid (Spa)
Country Brazil
Born September 22, 1976, in Bento Ribeiro, Rio de Janeiro
Previous clubs Cruzeiro, PSV Eindhoven (Hol), Barcelona (Spa), Internazionale (Ita)
International debut March 1994, v Argentina
International caps 75 (50 goals)
Honours World Cup 2002; Copa America 1997, 1999; European Cup-winners Cup 1997 (Barcelona); UEFA Cup 1998 (Inter); Dutch Cup 1996; Spanish League 2003 (Real Madrid)



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Oliver KAHN

German keeper under fire on and off the pitch

JUST AS WELL Bayern Munich and Germany keeper Oliver Kahn has a thick skin. The personal and professional attacks on him in recent months would have seriously wounded anyone with less than his teak-tough hide.

It used to be akin to heresy for the German media to criticise *Nationalmannschaft* skipper Kahn. For example, his handling blunder that led to Ronaldo's opening goal for Brazil in the 2002 World Cup Final was largely overlooked in Germany due to his exceptional work in earlier rounds. But since reports of adultery and the break-up of his marriage surfaced last year, he seems to be being seen through a different prism. With the mask of *ubermensch* (superman) removed, he has become fair game.

Kahn sells. Tabloids gleefully tell tales of his affair with a young Munich barmaid and plot the alleged transformation of a dedicated athlete into a smoking and drinking party animal.

FACT FILE

Club Bayern Munich
Country Germany
Born June 15, 1969, in Karlsruhe
Previous club Karlsruher
International debut June 1995, v Switzerland
International caps 66
Honours Champions League 2001; World Club Cup 2001; UEFA Cup 1996; German League 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003; German Cup 1998, 2000, 2003; Player of the 2002 World Cup

Meanwhile, the sports pages have focused on his supposed deficiencies – failing concentration, increasing weight, a troublesome back condition.

Always sure of himself, Kahn fought fire with fire. Speaking to leading German magazine *Kicker* last September, he derided his critics. "The only thing I'm lacking at the moment is luck," he said. "I'm working as hard as ever and will continue to be successful. I only take one per cent of criticism seriously. The other 99 per cent comes from those with no idea of goalkeeping."

To back up his words, Kahn's performances improved greatly over the next three months. However, a pair of high-profile gaffes in February again put him in the firing line. In Germany's 2-1 friendly win in Croatia he misjudged a corner, allowing Mato Neretljak to head home. Seven days later he made an even more appalling blunder in Bayern's second round, first leg Champions League clash with Real Madrid, clumsily spilling a Roberto Carlos free-kick over the line to gift Real a 1-1 draw.

The image of Kahn angrily pulling off his gloves and hurling them to the floor said it all. His error had swung the momentum in favour of Real, who won the return 1-0 to reach the quarter-finals. He could expect no mercy from the media and none was forthcoming.

Former Germany keeper Toni Schumacher wondered: "Kahn's concentration is suffering. Is the tank empty?" Another ex-*Nationalmannschaft* No 1, Andy Kopke, also questioned Kahn's future, while Lothar Matthaus seemed keen to settle old scores. "Kahn has criticised his team-mates a lot in the past," he said. "He's in for a rough ride."

Another itching to take aim was long-time national team understudy Jens Lehmann. Frustrated by six years on the German bench and no doubt emboldened by his success with Arsenal, Lehmann went in for one of his 'it should have been me' laments, arguing he was playing consistently better than Kahn.

But showing the same lack of self-discipline that has caused him so many problems with referees over the years, Lehmann went too far. When asked why he and Kahn never spoke while on national team duty, he sneered: "I didn't know we were meant to talk. I don't have a 24-year-old girlfriend. I have a different life."

The Kahn riposte was swift. "Lehmann can't handle being the No 2," he said. "It's always been like this. Now he's scraped the bottom of the barrel. What am I supposed to react to? A fellow goalkeeper's bitterness? I'm the No 1 and I'll remain so to the next World Cup."

Lehmann later apologised for his outburst, while after a meeting with the Arsenal keeper, Germany boss Rudi Voller reaffirmed Kahn was his first choice. "I don't expect them to go on holiday together," he said. "I only want them to have a reasonable working relationship."

Voller's confirmation of the pecking order was predictable. The Germany team have no better leader than Kahn, and as the coach points out, it's just Lehmann's bad luck to be the same age.

Nick Bidwell

Antonio CASSANO

Gifted Roma youngster who Italians hope will come of age in Portugal

ENGLAND COACH Sven Goran Eriksson hopes to meet him in the Euro 2004 final. His Roma captain and mentor Francesco Totti believes he will inherit his mantle in the Eternal City. Roma coach Fabio Capello says of all the players he has coached at his age, only three – Raul, Franco Baresi and Paolo Maldini – can be compared.

The player in question is 21-year-old Antonio Cassano. As Italy prepare for the Euro 2004 finals, Cassano is clearly in line to follow an honourable Italian tradition marked out by such as Paolo Rossi at Spain 82, Toto Schillaci at Italia 90 and Stefano Fiore at Euro 2000 – the inexperienced, lately-arrived player who proves himself one of the stars of the tournament.

At press time, Cassano has collected just two caps for Italy, scoring on his debut in a 3-1 friendly defeat by Poland last November. Such has been his form for Roma this season, though, that he is a strong contender not just for Giovanni Trapattoni's squad but his ideal starting line-up.

This has been the season when Cassano, a player for long labelled as the next Golden Boy of Italian football, has finally delivered. In his third season at Roma, he has won over Capello, who has made him an automatic first choice.

Cassano has rewarded the Roma coach not just with Serie A goals (11 by the end of March) but also some utterly breathtaking displays in which his partnership with Totti has spearheaded Roma's outrageously attractive, winning football. Cassano's coming of age has not escaped those who matter. Not only did he win his first full cap but, given Roma's financial problems, he has been a constant focus of enquiry from some of Europe's biggest clubs, including Internazionale, Chelsea and Manchester United.

Blessed with consummate ball skills and beautifully balanced (even if he tends to be very right-footed), Cassano has flourished dramatically in the shadow of Totti.

Cassano's definitive breakthrough this season might read like a natural progression. After all, more than four years ago, he was already being hailed as a future world-class talent. He first burst on the scene in December 1999 when, at 17, he turned out for Bari against Inter in one of his earliest Serie A games.

Two minutes from the end, he wrote himself into just about every European football scout's notebook with an outstanding flash of brilliance. Bari, 1-0 up, were under siege when Cassano collected a wild clearance deep inside his own half and set off on a 60-yard run that ended with Inter's World Cup-winning defender Laurent Blanc on his backside and the ball in the net.

Two years later and for £20 million, Cassano made his long-awaited move to Roma and the big time, but the youngster's explosive temperament, inexperience, curious mixture of fathomless self-belief and prickly, easy-to-offend sensitivity soon created problems for him.

He stormed his way out of Italy's Under-21 team, abandoning the training camp in a fit of pique with coach Claudio Gentile. On more than one occasion, even this season, his response to criticism from Capello during training has been to stomp off the field. Along with team-mate Vincenzo Montella, he has had minor run-ins with traffic police while out on the town late at night. In short, Cassano is a bit of a handful.

Capello, however, has ridden out the storms and has stuck with his man, based on his huge regard for the player's talent.

All the indications are that Trapattoni rates him, too. He has called Cassano a "pre-destined player, like Totti, Alessandro Del Piero and Roberto Baggio". Cassano may not only make the squad but could even take over from Del Piero – who has rarely looked like his old self during a miserable, injury-interrupted season with Juventus – in the team itself.

Then there is Cassano's understanding with Totti. Given that Totti is the standard-bearer around whom Trapattoni will build his Euro 2004 side, Cassano's ability to play alongside him could swing things his way.

Paddy Agnew

FACT FILE

Club Roma
Country Italy
Born July 12, 1982, in Bari
Previous club Bari
International debut November 2003, v Poland
International caps 2 (1 goal)

Heading for a fall...Spanish expectations are low after a disappointing qualifying campaign

Why all the fuss?

The Spanish are struggling to get excited about a tournament happening on their doorstep. Sid Lowe reports

EURO 2004 MAY be just around the corner, geographically and chronologically, but there is remarkably little excitement or anticipation in Spain.

So accustomed have the Spanish become to declaring this to be their year only to fall inexplicably at the same, quarter-final hurdle, that this time it is as if they dare not display any optimism. Instead, there is a vague lack of conviction. There is a sense – perhaps a deliberate, fate-tempting sense – that it's time to keep quiet; perhaps a subconscious feeling that by showing few outward signs of confidence things might, just, turn out better.

Perhaps. But the feeling is also genuine. The normal factors, such as the relative unimportance of the national team in relation to the giants of Spanish club football and the long history of underachievement, have played their part, as has the presence of Inaki Saez as manager.

Cautious, quiet and pleasant, Saez, a product of the youth system at Athletic Bilbao, where he spent his playing career, has not completely won over the predominantly Madrid-based press. Certainly not like his predecessor – the tub-thumping, sabre-rattling Jose Antonio Camacho. He of the sweaty armpits.

It seems that nothing Saez does meets with approval. He is yet to make a definitive decision about the conundrum of which players to play up front in the 4-2-3-1 formation to which he sticks fast. And he has refused to be drawn into headline-grabbing, patriotic calls to arms: there have been no emotive declarations of winning intent like there was from Camacho, no grand statements about Spain's place in the world.

It was remarkable how far rhetoric carried Camacho – a real never-say-die player at Madrid and an all-or-nothing kind of manager – with the press and, by extension, the public. But it is just not in Saez's nature to act the same way.

Low-key...Inaki Saez

Besides, while Spain may have lost just one competitive match under him, the manner in which they qualified – through the play-offs after only finishing second in their group – has hardly convinced, adding to the downbeat atmosphere.

In the event Spain showed insulting superiority when seeing off Norway in the play-off second leg in Oslo. They moved the ball with ease and strolled to a 3-0 win – on goals from Raul, Vicente and Joseba Etxeberria – that gave them a 5-1 aggregate triumph.

The trouble was that, as far as the Spanish were concerned, they should never have been forced to go into the play-offs in the first place. The team, it was felt, should have romped through a group against Greece, Northern Ireland, Ukraine and Armenia. But it was the Greeks that topped the table, and now Spain will meet them again in Portugal, desperate for revenge.

Four dreadful days last June did the damage. First of all came a 1-0 defeat by Greece in Zaragoza, the Spaniards' first defeat at home for 12 years. But an even more embarrassing result was to follow. "Now it is vital for us to go to Belfast and get a good win," said Saez after the Greek defeat. They didn't. Northern Ireland, who had not won in 10 matches and failed to score in over 900 minutes of football, held Spain to a 0-0 draw. Greece took advantage to go top.

Bright hope...Joaquin

Finishing second to Greece is poor for a country of Spain's footballing stature, and yet they were really rather unlucky. Or, depending on your point of view, they sorely lacked an out-an-out goalscorer – an accusation that can still be levelled now. Full-back Michel Salgado insists: "I thought we were OK; not many teams had a better record than us. It's just that Greece went and won their last four."

Masked man...Carles Puyol

He has a point, too. Spain only lost once, drawing two more. It was those two slips in June that left them travelling to Portugal via Norway. They dominated both games but just could not score. And they repeated the trick in the play-off first leg in Valencia, when wasting an incredible 34 shots and only winning 2-1.

"We controlled the game and made plenty of chances; they scored with their only attempt," lamented Saez after the match against Greece in Zaragoza. Against Northern Ireland, the tale was taller still: "Crazy but true," as one newspaper put it. Iker Casillas may have had to come to the rescue – twice – at the end of Irish counter-attacks, but Spain boasted 27 shots on goal.

There are some, if few, optimists who think that struggling to qualify could end up being good news for a national side that normally cruises through all too easily.

Perhaps it will bring a change of psyche; maybe it has fostered a little mental toughness. Saez certainly thinks so: "The players had a gun to their heads and had to be everything or nothing," he said after the play-off. "They proved themselves to be everything."

Could be. After all, something had to change for Spain to finally be successful in a major tournament. Maybe it was the manner of qualification. Maybe this will be Spain's year after all. But then, haven't we heard that somewhere before?

THE SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GLS
GOALKEEPERS				
Daniel ARANZUBIA	Athletic Bilbao	18.09.79	0	0
Santiago CANIZARES	Valencia	18.12.69	40	0
Iker CASILLAS	Real Madrid	20.05.81	34	0
DEFENDERS				
Joan CAPDEVILA	Deportivo La Coruna	02.03.78	2	0
CESAR Martin	Deportivo La Coruna	03.04.77	9	2
Asier DEL HORNO	Athletic Bilbao	19.01.81	0	0
GABRI	Barcelona	10.02.79	1	0
IVAN HELGUERA	Real Madrid	28.03.75	39	3
Carlos MARCHENA	Valencia	31.07.79	13	0
MICHEL SALGADO	Real Madrid	22.10.75	33	0
Carles PUYOL	Barcelona	13.04.78	24	1
RAUL BRAVO	Real Madrid	14.04.81	9	0
Enrique ROMERO	Deportivo La Coruna	23.06.71	7	0
MIDFIELDERS				
David ALBELDA	Valencia	01.09.77	13	0
Ruben BARAJA	Valencia	11.07.75	29	6
Joseba ETXEBERRIA	Athletic Bilbao	05.09.77	48	12
GUTI	Real Madrid	31.10.76	10	2
JOAQUIN Sanchez	Betis	21.07.81	18	2
SERGIO Gonzalez	Deportivo La Coruna	10.11.76	10	0
Juan Carlos VALERON	Deportivo La Coruna	17.06.75	38	3
VICENTE Rodriguez	Valencia	16.07.81	21	1
XABI ALONSO	Real Sociedad	25.11.81	6	0
XAVI	Barcelona	25.01.80	17	0
FORWARDS				
FERNANDO TORRES	Atletico Madrid	20.03.84	3	0
Alberto LUQUE	Deportivo La Coruna	11.03.78	4	0
Fernando MORIENTES	Monaco (Fra)	05.04.76	30	20
RAUL Gonzalez	Real Madrid	27.06.77	69	37
Jose Antonio REYES	Arsenal (Eng)	01.09.83	4	2
SALVA Ballesta	Malaga	25.05.75	3	0

Caps and goals up to and including Spain v Peru (18.02.04)

Friendly fire...Juan Carlos Valeron in action against Peru

Portugal here we come...Marcus Allback is hugged by Anders Svensson and Mattias Jonson after scoring during the 3-0 win over Poland in Stockholm

End of the double act

The Portugal tournament will be the final fling for the Swedes' co-coaching experiment. Pentti Hietanen reports

SWEDEN PREPARE FOR a third consecutive major international tournament under joint national coaches Lars Lagerback and Tommy Soderberg but knowing it will be their last together.

Soderberg, the jovial Stockholm man who has been troubled recently by back problems, will step down after the Portugal finals. Lagerback will continue until the 2006 World Cup finals, at last claiming centre stage on his own after so many years lurking in the Swedish FA corridors.

The jury is still out on whether the joint coach experiment – in place since the Euro 2000 qualifiers – has been a success, but the results have certainly been more than respectable. Sweden's defeat by Latvia last October was their first in either a European Championship or World Cup qualifying match for six years, ending a 25-game unbeaten run.

Yet the public has not been totally won over, especially by Lagerback. As the partner in charge of playing tactics (Soderberg's focus is on man-management), he has frequently come under fire for putting too much emphasis on effort and team unity rather than skill.

Lagerback also has a knack of infuriating the media with his stiff-lipped comments, spiced with sarcasm that can border on cynicism, while the fans have often found his personality somewhat distant and enigmatic. His knowledge of the game may be second to none, yet many Swedes still dismiss him as just another safety-first merchant whose teams produce boring football.

However, Lagerback's brand of *realpolitik* points the way to the future. As one of Sweden's leading daily papers put it: "Beyond any doubt, the Swedish team in Portugal will be the creation of Lars Lagerback. Retiring Tommy Soderberg is already like a US president at the end of his term – a lame duck."

Sweden began their qualifying campaign with two strained draws, although in hindsight, holding Latvia goalless in Riga was not as bad as it

Imposing...Michael Svensson

was made out to be at the time. But to reach the finals the team needed to win, and in 2003 they responded splendidly with five consecutive victories. By the time of the home hiccup against the Latvians they had already qualified.

Sweden took enormous strength from their 3-0 home victory over Poland, potentially their biggest rivals in the group. A lovely June evening at Stockholm's Rasunda stadium was the setting for two goals from Anders Svensson and some staggering interplay between the Southampton midfielder and Arsenal's Freddie Ljungberg.

But the 2-0 victory in the rematch in Chorzow, which put Sweden in the finals, was based more on tenacity and organisation, with both goals resulting from set-pieces. The Poles attacked for lengthy periods, but the Swedes stoutly hung on, spurred by their new captain, Olof Mellberg, who also stormed up to head in their second goal from a corner.

In Portugal, Sweden's main strengths – not surprisingly – will

Interplay...Freddie Ljungberg

be their single-minded team effort and defensive craft.

They will line-up in a 4-1-3-2 formation. Andreas Isaksson has efficiently replaced the fading Magnus Hedman in goal, while in defence stoppers Mellberg and Michael Svensson form an imposing duo hardened by countless rearguard battles in the English Premiership. They will be joined by Teddy Lucic at right-back and Erik Edman on the left.

The midfield anchorman will be either Tobias Linderoth or Johan Mjallby, if he is fit, although Andreas Jakobsson also revelled in that role in

Options...Mikael Nilsson

the qualifiers. The emergence of Mikael Nilsson and Kim Kallstrom means Sweden now have a greater range in midfield. Kallstrom and Anders Svensson are both free-kick specialists – remember Svensson's cracker against Argentina in the 2002 World Cup? – while Ljungberg's runs on the blind side are still potentially lethal.

The chief problem would appear to be in attack – more specifically, in delivering the knockout punch. Marcus Allback chipped in with a few goals in the qualifiers, including a match-winning brace against Hungary in Budapest last April. But he has never been, and probably never will be, more than a bit-part player at Aston Villa, while his recent hip operation is another worrying factor. If Allback cannot play, and if the much-debated return of Henrik Larsson does not come to pass, where will the coaches find another forward with an international pedigree?

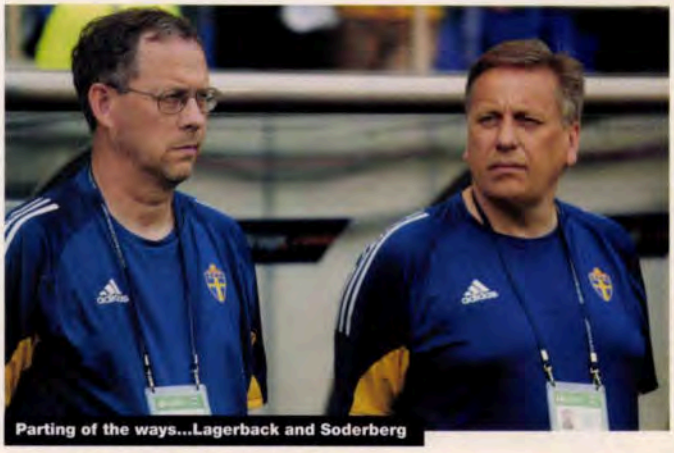
Of course, there is always Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the idiosyncratic Ajax star, who has a lot of support in Sweden. On his day, he is an elusive striker, whose runs, twists and turns can unsettle any defence in the world. But his explosive temperament puts him just one short step away from being sent off, and he, too, has missed a lot of action lately because of a groin injury.

At Euro 2000, Sweden took only one point from their three finals games and finished bottom of their group. If they can avoid injuries to key players, they should make a better fight of it this time round.

THE SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GLS
GOALKEEPERS				
Eddie GUSTAFSSON	Molde (Nor)	31.01.77	4	0
Magnus HEDMAN	Ancona (Ita)	19.03.73	54	0
Andreas ISAKSSON	Djurgardens	03.10.81	16	0
DEFENDERS				
Christoffer ANDERSSON	Helsingborgs	22.10.78	18	0
Mikael DORSIN	Strasbourg (Fra)	06.10.81	5	0
Erik EDMAN	Heerenveen (Hol)	11.11.78	17	0
Petter HANSSON	Heerenveen (Hol)	14.12.76	2	0
Andreas JAKOBSSON	Brondby (Den)	06.10.72	30	1
Nils-Eric JOHANSSON	Blackburn (Eng)	13.01.80	3	0
Teddy LUCIC	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	15.04.73	57	0
Olof MELLBERG	Aston Villa (Eng)	03.09.77	40	1
Michael SVENSSON	Southampton (Eng)	25.11.75	25	0
Max VON SCHLEEBRUGGE	Hammarby	01.02.77	2	0
MIDFIELDERS				
Anders ANDERSSON	Belenenses (Por)	15.03.74	20	2
Pontus FARNERUD	Strasbourg (Fra)	04.06.80	7	0
Andreas JOHANSSON	Djurgardens	05.07.78	11	0
Mattias JONSON	Brondby (Den)	16.01.74	36	6
Kim KALLSTROM	Rennes (Fra)	24.08.82	15	1
Tobias LINDEROTH	Everton (Eng)	21.04.79	32	1
Fredrik LJUNGBERG	Arsenal (Eng)	16.04.77	39	3
Johan MJALLBY	Celtic (Sco)	09.02.71	44	4
Mikael NILSSON	Halmstads	24.06.78	13	3
Anders SVENSSON	Southampton (Eng)	17.07.76	43	10
Christian WILHELMSSON	Anderlecht (Blg)	08.12.79	4	0
FORWARDS				
Marcus ALLBACK	Aston Villa (Eng)	05.07.73	36	15
Johan ELMANDER	NAC Breda (Hol)	27.05.81	7	3
Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC	Ajax (Hol)	03.10.81	19	6
Rade PRICA	Hansa Rostock (Ger)	30.06.80	6	0
Stefan SELAKOVIC	Heerenveen (Hol)	09.01.77	10	4
Niklas SKOOG	Malmo	15.06.74	8	4

Caps and goals up to and including Albania v Sweden (18.02.04)


Parting of the ways...Lagerback and Soderberg

Oh brother...there are concerns about both Hakan (lack of match practice) and Murat Yakin (injury) in the run-up to the finals

Fit for action?

The Swiss have worries over a number of key players. Nick Bidwell reports

FOOTBALL'S GODS CLEARLY care little for Switzerland's neutrality. Injuries, players out of favour at club level and a recent morale-sapping loss to a scratch Moroccan XI have plunged their European Championship preparations into turmoil.

The most pressing problem facing coach Kobi Kuhn concerns the highly-influential Yakin siblings. Central defender and back four organiser Murat Yakin is unlikely to be ready for D-day after undergoing surgery on a hamstring, while his younger brother, star playmaker Hakan, is desperately short of match practice following a mid-season move from Basle to Stuttgart in Germany.

A target for many leading clubs on the continent, Hakan had been expected to go straight into the Stuttgart first team, but thus far coach Felix Magath has barely used him, giving him only the occasional run out as a substitute.

Magath has a well-rehearsed explanation when asked why he has kept Yakin on the sidelines, pointing out that since he missed nearly all of pre-season because of a groin injury, he still has work to do on his fitness.

"It was always our intention that Hakan was a signing for next season rather than the current one," said Magath. "He's still not ready. He has to be patient."

That may be asking too much. Renowned for being a strong-willed character – only last summer his unauthorised hernia operation provoked Paris Saint-Germain into rescinding his contract after just a few weeks – Hakan knows his inactivity is damaging his Euro 2004 prospects.

As for Switzerland, they badly need a match-fit, confident Hakan. No one else comes close to matching his flair, wonderful range of passing, free-kick prowess and eye for goal.

Kuhn, the former Switzerland midfielder who is the country's first native national coach for a dozen years, has many more headaches. Werder Bremen left-back Ludovic Magnin has hardly featured this term because of hamstring trouble, Liverpool centre-back Stephane

Tactical nous...Kobi Kuhn

Henchoz is no longer an automatic choice at Anfield, young 1860 Munich defender Remo Meyer has suffered with knee trouble and inconsistency, while midfielder Ricardo Cabanas recently returned to first club Grasshopper after failing to find his feet during an unhappy six-month spell in France with Guingamp.

The Swiss also have a major worry in the goalkeeping position after first choice Jorg Stiel was dropped by Borussia Monchengladbach following an error-ridden display against Eintracht Frankfurt in late February. "I cannot imagine picking Jorg if he's only on the bench at Gladbach," says Kuhn. Basle's Pascal Zuberbuhler stands by to step in.

Drawn in an extremely difficult first round group, with France, England and Croatia, Switzerland will have to show decidedly better form in Portugal than they did in their 2-1 friendly defeat by Morocco's second string in February. Their opponents dominated in most areas and could have won by a greater margin.

"The Moroccans gave us the run around for almost the whole match,"

Club worries...Stephane Henchoz

declared Henchoz. "We were outclassed technically and couldn't cope with their speed."

Not that the news has been all bad, however. After struggling in his first 12 months with French club Rennes, striker Alexander Frei has been scoring goals left, right and centre since the turn of the year. Meanwhile, his national team strike-partner, veteran Stephane Chapuisat, has been in fine fettle for Young Boys.

Of course, the 34-year-old does not cover the ground as quickly as he used to in his heyday with Borussia Dortmund. But his clever movement

Dropped by Gladbach...Jorg Stiel

and dribbling ability offer much in the way of compensation and, given the room to operate, his vicious left foot can cause damage.

"After this tournament I will retire from the national team and I'd love to go out on a high note," says Chapuisat. "England and France are top-class opponents but football can throw up surprises. Everything will depend on what we do in our first game, against Croatia. The defeat in Morocco taught us an important lesson – we must give 100 per cent in every game."

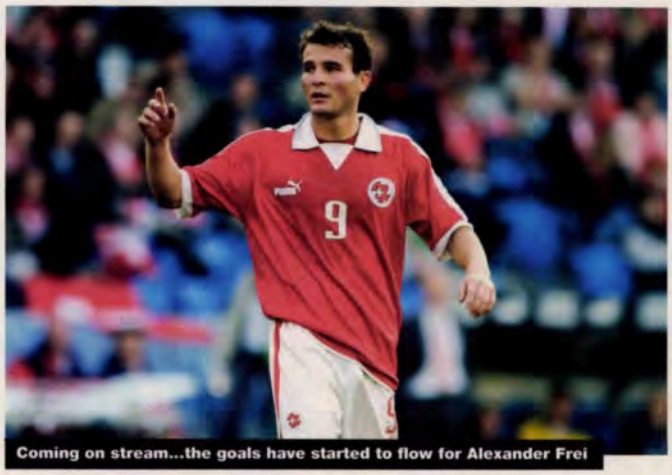
Chapuisat is right to stress the need for total application. The Swiss qualifying campaign for Euro 2004 was underpinned by relentless effort, team unity and good organisation. Under Kuhn, tactical discipline has been the order of the day, an approach not a million miles away from that used by Englishman Roy Hodgson to steer the Swiss to USA 94 and Euro 96. "The work of Kobi Kuhn has been highly satisfactory. He has qualified us for the European Championship and built a team with lots of young, exciting players," says federation president Ralph Zloczower.

The substantial resources the Swiss have poured into youth development in the past few years are bearing fruit. No fewer than seven of the Under-21 side that reached the 2002 European Championship semi-finals – Frei, Cabanas, Meyer, Magnin, defenders Stephan Keller of Zurich and Auxerre's Stephane Grichting, and Zurich attacker Daniel Gygax – are now in the senior squad. Their enthusiasm will be vital come June.

THE SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GLS
GOALKEEPERS				
Fabrice BORER	Grasshopper	24.12.71	3	0
Jorg STIEL	Monchengladbach (Ger)	03.03.68	15	0
Pascal ZUBERBUHLER	Basle	08.01.71	18	0
DEFENDERS				
Bruno BERNER	Freiburg (Ger)	21.11.77	12	0
Philipp DEGEN	Basle	15.02.83	0	0
Stephane GRICHTING	Auxerre (Fra)	30.03.79	0	0
Bernt HAAS	West Bromwich (Eng)	08.04.78	25	3
Stephane HENCHOZ	Liverpool (Eng)	07.09.74	62	0
Stephan KELLER	Zurich	31.05.79	3	0
Ludovic MAGNIN	Werder Bremen (Ger)	20.04.79	11	1
Remo MEYER	1860 Munich (Ger)	12.11.80	4	0
Patrick MULLER	Lyon (Fra)	17.12.76	42	2
Roland SCHWEGLER	Grasshopper	03.02.82	0	0
Murat YAKIN	Basle	15.09.74	41	5
Marco ZWYSSIG	Basle	24.10.71	19	1
MIDFIELDERS				
Ricardo CABANAS	Grasshopper	17.01.79	16	3
Mario CANTALUPPI	Basle	11.04.74	23	4
Fabio CELESTINI	Marseille (Fra)	31.10.75	25	1
Benjamin HUGGEL	Basle	07.07.77	4	0
Johann LONFAT	Sochaux (Fra)	11.09.73	15	1
Christoph SPYCHER	Grasshopper	30.03.78	4	0
Johann VOGEL	PSV Eindhoven (Hol)	08.03.77	62	2
Raphael WICKY	Hamburg (Ger)	26.04.77	49	0
Hakan YAKIN	Stuttgart (Ger)	22.02.77	28	12
FORWARDS				
Stephane CHAPUISAT	Young Boys	28.06.69	97	21
Alexander FREI	Rennes (Fra)	15.07.79	23	15
Daniel GYGAX	Zurich	28.08.81	0	0
Milaim RAMA	Thun	29.02.76	3	0
Marco STRELLER	Stuttgart (Ger)	18.06.81	2	0
Leonard THURRE	Servette	09.09.77	8	0

Caps and goals up to and including Morocco v Switzerland (18.02.04)


Coming on stream...the goals have started to flow for Alexander Frei

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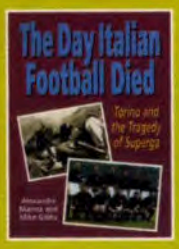

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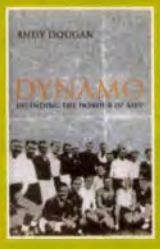

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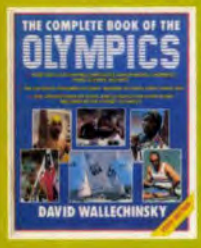

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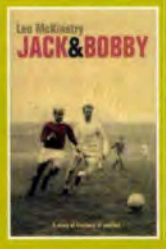

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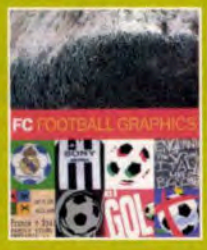

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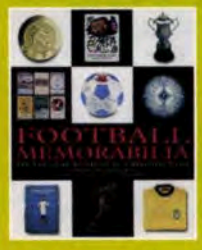

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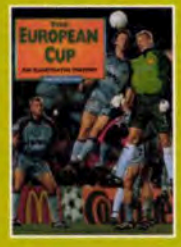

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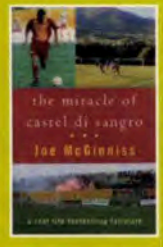

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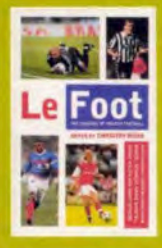

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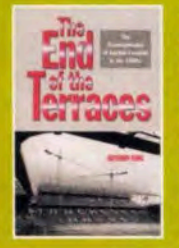

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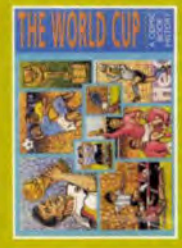

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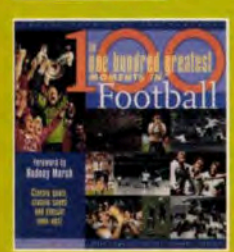

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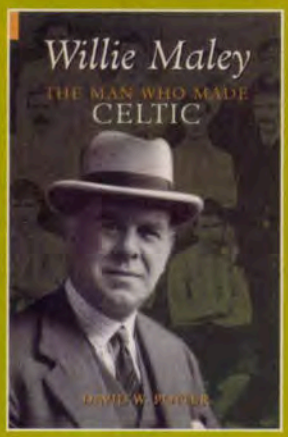

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Hoping to impress...the FIFA inspection team run the rule over a model of a proposed new Egyptian stadium

Africa awaits

On May 15, FIFA will decide which of the continent's five bidders will host the 2010 World Cup. Keir Radnedge reports

FOUR YEARS AGO FIFA decided – in theory initially – that rotation of the World Cup around the continents was the only diplomatic way to proceed after the chaotic conclusion to bidding for the 2006 finals.

South Africa did not win the vote in Zurich that day, pipped controversially at the post by Germany. But they did achieve a long-term victory in forcing the world game to take Africa seriously as a host continent.

"Asia broke the barriers for the rest of the world," said South African bid leader Danny Jordaan once the furore had died now. "Now FIFA has to show that this was not a token gesture." Thus, on May 15 in Zurich, history will be made by FIFA twice over. President Sepp Blatter and his 23-man executive will be voting for the first time in the new rotation era; and they will send the World Cup finals to Africa for the first time.

Egypt, Libya, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia are the five contestants. Morocco and South Africa are out in front, Egypt are an unknown quantity, while Libya and Tunisia can forget it.

"Africa deserved the World Cup a long time ago," says Roger Milla, Cameroon's ubiquitous spokesman for African football under a variety of guises. "We have the passion and the talent and we also have countries well capable of hosting the finals. Once the world has come to Africa it will want to come back as soon as possible."

That is the crux of the issue. Rotation is both fair and unfair. It guarantees the World Cup to a continent but only once every 20 years. When Jordaan came to terms with the decision four years ago at least he knew South Africa could bid again, immediately. The May 15 losers will have no such consolation.

It had been thought there might be a shortlisting role for the African confederation but president Issa Hayatou preferred in the end to stand well back and leave the diplomatic minefield for FIFA to tread.

Belgium's Jan Peeters has taken his inspection team to all five competing countries, making the standard complimentary statements in each. He could have had a longer trip. Initially, Cameroon and Ghana made noises and Nigeria went to the brink of making document submissions before being forced to withdraw in humiliating circumstances; it could not raise the air fares to send its delegation to Zurich.

'Once the world has come to Africa it will soon want to return'

Roger Milla, former Cameroon idol

Libya and Tunisia, ignoring FIFA strictures and common sense, decided initially on a joint bid. This was immediately blown out of the water by Blatter. "I do not see co-hosting as a possibility again for a very long time, if ever," he once told me. The experience of Korea/Japan 2002 was a costly one, both politically and financially, and in the new era of FIFA financial probity there is no way that experiment can ever be repeated.

Host advantage

One of Blatter's predecessors, Sir Stanley Rous, first raised the prospect of Africa hosting the World Cup back in the early 1960s. Brazilians Joao Saldanha and then Pele later envisaged an African winner "before the end of the 20th century".

Now Rous's vision is coming to reality, and while the Saldanha/Pele predictions did not come true, no one should bet against whichever African nation hosts the third finals of the new century actually winning the event. Just consider the host advantage power that the Koreans harnessed on their way to the semi-finals in 2002.

The latter point puts extra value on the hosting prize at stake. But who will win it? Libya and Tunisia can be discounted. The Libyans have played football diplomacy effectively with Italy, in particular, but the world is a step too far. The Tunisians were less than half-hearted about their bid even while they hosted the African Nations Cup.

Egypt is a far more serious candidate, though their offering of four venues in the Cairo region looks lazy, while the promotional thrust has been powered more by private initiative than state ambition.

That leaves Morocco and South Africa to fight it out, like Korea and Japan in 1996. South Africa, like Japan then, have been leading the race so long their effort has virtually ground to a standstill. Morocco, coming late, have that aggressive Korean buzz about them and are shrewdly advised by USA 94 supremo Alan Rothenberg. If they pipped South Africa at the post it would be far less of a surprise than Germany's victory four years ago.

MOROCCO

Fourth time lucky?

MOROCCO ARE COMING up fast on the 2010 bidding rails, and they appear to be holding their nerve better than South Africa, for what that may be worth.

Saad Kettani, the banker personally appointed to lead the bid by King Mohammed VI, has been in the job less than a year. But he has reinvigorated the bid committee with a team of new generation technocrats and brought in consultants whose hands-on World Cup knowledge would be any host's envy.

Chief among the key strategic advisers is Alan Rothenberg, who ran soccer at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 and was then hand-picked by FIFA to take over the United States Soccer Federation and run the 1994 World Cup.

Long-time Rothenberg associate Bob Stiles oversees logistics; FIFA's 2002 technology boss Gerard Gouillou reprises a role he first perfected in his native France in 1998; and another Frenchman, Jacques Lambert, the 1998 chief executive who did the hard work while Michel Platini took the promotional plaudits, leads an experienced back-up crew.

But having the team and plans is one thing, securing votes is something else, and the clock is wearing away at the diplomatic niceties that should prevent nation speaking irritation unto nation.

The South Africans' observation to FIFA that Morocco are "used to being a candidate" may not have been intended to suggest that their rivals were also used to losing. But that is how the Moroccans perceived it. The latter took quiet satisfaction from their national team's runners-up finish at this year's Nations Cup, which revealed South Africa's FA to be in all sorts of administrative chaos.

Kettani has been flying the world promoting his case and underlining, for anyone who cares to remember, that both Morocco the country and Morocco the bid authority are under new management.

He sounds like Alastair Campbell as he spins his tale that "our bid represents a new Morocco, built on solid financial foundations. We have a love of football and we have played a significant historical role in African football. We are also an ideal location for the World Cup because we have exciting cities full of history and character.

Welcome home...the national team, fresh from finishing runners-up in the Nations Cup, add lustre to the World Cup bid

"It's true this is the fourth time we've bid. The first time was for 1994 when we lost by one vote to the United States; South Africa always talks of losing by one vote for 2006 but we have done that, too. In 1992 we bid for a second time and lost to France for 1998 by only three votes. That was not a surprise if you consider that Europe accounts for eight votes out of the minimum 13 needed for a majority.

"Against Germany for 2006 we also lost. But that was normal again, to lose to a giant of world football like that."

Launch pad

In any case, Morocco's bid campaign had ground to a halt after the death of King Hassan II in the summer of 1999. But the accession of Mohammed VI has caused a modest revolution in the country itself and proved the launch pad for the latest bid.

Morocco has launched a variety of social and cultural reforms, and also charged down the economic road of privatisation. The sums raised over and above the original forecasts for each successive privatisation are invested in major social and infrastructure projects – such as the World Cup bid. But bidding to host the World Cup is not merely about staging matches, as the Moroccans have finally realised.

'In the past we didn't realise that the World Cup is not just about football but a global project'

Morocco bid leader Saad Kettani

Kettani says: "Previously, we did not give the event the real importance it deserved. We didn't realise that it's not only about football but a global project.

"Morocco faces a lot of challenges and we need to increase our revenue to meet them, so all the projects that can help are crucial. I could not have convinced the King and the Prime Minister to put money into this World Cup project unless I had been able to demonstrate how it can contribute – for example, in creating 400,000 jobs and bringing in billions to the economy."

Kettani promises a fund to support the development of pan-African football and he has already lodged the cash to underwrite organisational costs in Switzerland with Credit Suisse. France will vote for him, so will Spain. Those are powerful supporters.

He has three stadiums ready, three being built and three awaiting the go-ahead...on May 15, he hopes.

Keir Radnedge

SOUTH AFRICA

Favourites exude confidence

SOUTH AFRICA HAS everything going for its World Cup bid. The magic of the Nelson Mandela legend provides added lustre to all that has been achieved on the ground over the past 14 years since he walked out of Robben Island.

The country has staged the African Nations Cup finals – at short notice – and the World Cups in both cricket and rugby union. Thus, its ability to welcome and support major sports events cannot be denied and nor can its passion for sport.

Danny Jordaan has been an outstanding statesman on the world football scene. He brought credibility and competence to the 2006 bid and it says much for his character that he could pick himself up, dust himself off and start all over again after the one-vote defeat by Germany four years ago.

Jordaan reels off statistics about the prospective wealth and industrial growth of the country that dwarfs anything else in Africa, if not all the rest of Africa put together. On finance he assures that the country is investing heavily in infrastructure whether or not it wins the World Cup vote.

South Africa has both resources and stadia in place. It also has an advantage over last time in not having to 'sell' Africa as worthy host continent. Jordaan says: "This is really helpful also because it means we don't have to go head to head against the great traditional powers.

"FIFA used to be just an organisation for taking care of the laws of the game and running the World Cup once every four years. Now it's much more of a commercial entity. Everything has to be properly budgeted and cost-controlled. That has put the bidding emphasis for 2010 much more on the financial aspects than was the case."

Not everything in the South African garden is rosy. It sometimes appears as if the FA has been working against the bid rather than for it. The muddle that surrounded the sacking of Ephraim Mashaba as national coach on the eve of the African Nations Cup – followed by the team's first round exit – was bad PR.

Idols and icons...David Beckham meets Nelson Mandela

'We don't have to go head to head with the great traditional powers'

South Africa bid leader Danny Jordaan

So was a critical statement attributed to SAFA president Molefi Oliphant in the run-up to a vain bid by Botswana's Ismael Bhamjee to topple Issa Hayatou as president of the African confederation. Bhamjee took it as a personal snub, and though Oliphant apologised it may yet prove costly. Bhamjee is one of four African representatives on FIFA's executive. May 15 will pass its own verdict on the relationship between present realities and long-term potential.

Keir Radnedge

EGYPT

Wild card in the pack

THE EGYPTIANS HAVE all the raw materials to mount a credible bid to host the World Cup in 2010. Whether they have the political clout with FIFA to force home that advantage remains to be seen.

"We have everything already in place," says Hisham Azmy, the architect fronting Egypt's bid. "Our people are passionate about football and we have experience of organising top-level competition."

Egypt is the only African nation to have hosted a FIFA tournament, the Under-17 World Championship in 1999. Crucially for the Egyptians, they will also host the African Nations Cup in 2006, so most of the stadiums that would be used for 2010 are already built.

Azmy expands on his country's assets, from the stadiums, transport infrastructure and numerous tourist hotels to hospitals and the satellite communications system, the most advanced in Africa. "Ours is a bid built on solid foundations," he boasts.

Azmy hopes to capitalise on Egypt's status as a superpower of African football.

Talking sport...Sepp Blatter and Egypt's President Mubarak

'We have everything already in place'

Hisham Azmy, the Egyptian bid leader

Egypt was the first African nation to compete in the World Cup, in 1934, has won the Nations Cup a record three times and the continental federation, CAF, has its headquarters in Cairo.

But while the infrastructure and heritage are impressive, the Egyptians have missed a trick by not emphasising the country's status as the birthplace of civilisation, a nation at the centre of the world map.

Opponents of the bid have been quick to suggest Islamic terrorism will pose a threat to Egypt's chances, but the Egyptians insist their security is tighter than ever, while privately shifting attention to the crime rate in South Africa and terrorism in Morocco, in the light of the Madrid bombings.

While all the disparate elements of the bid suggest the Egyptians have a strong case for 2010, harnessing the potential has proved more difficult. The entire Egyptian FA executive resigned after the country's exit at the group stage of this year's Nations Cup in Tunisia. Azmy may yet be elected as the new FA president, but in the meantime has been left to plough a lonely furrow, along with private backers of the bid.

Privately, the Egyptians believe that few votes have been definitely allocated. If they can gain more than Morocco in the first round of voting, they feel they have a chance of overhauling South Africa in a vote that would essentially pit Arab Africa against black Africa. But that is a tall order.

Gavin Hamilton

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Nyon lights

Lars-Christer Olsson has made a positive start as UEFA chief executive. He gave Keir Radnedge an exclusive interview

LARS-CHRISTER OLSSON is about to come face to face with the hardest test of UEFA's credibility.The new chief executive of the European confederation has been left the awkward legacy of bringing the club licensing system into effect.

Several federations – notably the French – feel that the rules and the policing are not as effective as they should be. Olsson's answer is about to be revealed following doubts about whether several of Italy's leading clubs – notably Roma and Lazio – can be allowed into the Champions League or UEFA Cup next season.

At a time when the fraud squad is studying a paper trail seized from all the Serie A and Serie B clubs, it is hard to see how UEFA can grant licences without being accused of condoning *calcio's* ingrained accounting misdemeanours. Olsson says: "Certainly, to us credibility is extremely important. But I don't know exactly how serious the situation is in Italy. These police enquiries could take years and, anyway, we are really concerned only about those clubs who may qualify for European competitions.

"Italian clubs have always shown they are extremely good at improvising when a crisis comes up, so I wouldn't be surprised if all of them are clear. I think the financial situation is probably more serious for clubs further down the League."

Hot seat...Olsson

'Italian clubs have always shown they are good at improvising when a crisis comes'

Vetting the books

UEFA has taken powers, under the licensing system, to appoint an independent auditor to vet a club's books – from Sliema Wanderers to Real Madrid. Olsson says: "The machinery for this is already in place. We just have to push the button if we think it's necessary."

A common criticism of football authorities has been a lack of teeth to launch inquiries into issues such as financial corruption and doping. But Olsson believes, at last, UEFA has solved the problem – at least where licensing and thus accounting and financial stability are concerned.

He says: "We do have one very strong weapon, which is to kick clubs out of our competitions. For me, that is a stronger power than any other. If there's a problem then the clubs have to solve it or they don't get in any more. It's the ultimate weapon."

Thus, at least Gerd Aigner ensured he left a useful weapon for Olsson to wield after the long-serving CEO suddenly decided last year to step away from top-level soccer administration to spend more time with his family. The two men are similar, in terms of administrative efficiency and attention to detail. But their background differs considerably – just as the UEFA giant Olsson has taken over contrasts sharply with the short-sighted little outfit into which Aigner strode 30 years ago.

"I was not a good player," says Olsson, "I reached only the Third Division in Sweden so I soon decided I was better at administration. I started in the south of Sweden, then I was offered a job by the district association – which is how I came into football."

An appointment in the leisure industry, the acquisition of an MBA in business management and a spell with a software company brought Olsson full circle back into football with the Swedish League. He had joined in 1989 having negotiated a part-time post so he could start a PhD. It was never completed.

The Swedish federation snapped him up in 1991 and, almost immediately, a colleague's illness landed him in the hot seat as tournament director for Euro 92. Olsson soon found himself caught up in the controversial exclusion of Yugoslavia on security grounds – a decision taken when the squad was already in Sweden for a training camp. Once the decision was taken the Slavs had to pack up and go.

"I was at the airport when the Yugoslav squad flew out," says Olsson. "The timing was already very tight and then BP was stopped by the British government from refuelling their plane. We found them fuel from somewhere and they were still told to wait for a slot. But the captain said: 'I am not waiting – I am going to take off now otherwise I won't get into Polish airspace in time and I won't be able to land anywhere.' So he did. Hopefully, we won't have anything like that in Portugal this year."

Olsson is proud of what is being accomplished behind the scenes ahead of Euro 2004. He says: "What has been achieved there is amazing – building 10 new stadia in such a short period of time, with only 10 million inhabitants in the country. Everything, from motorways to the stadia infrastructure, is a huge, huge achievement. This means the conditions for Portuguese clubs in the future are completely different. When it comes to infrastructure, Portugal is the best in Europe, so if the clubs can regain their old quality they can become a big nation in European football again.

"Organisationally, we have no problems. There is always a worry about hooliganism but everything else is in place. Now it's up to the players to make it a success.

"As for security and hooligans I think we have done whatever can be done. The Portuguese have been very active in liaising with the authorities from the various associations. When it comes to England, I think domestic legislation is now stronger than it was for Euro 2000 when there was no way to stop hooligans leaving England. So I hope they will be able to keep these criminal elements at home.

"On the other hand, Portugal is a tourist country, so a lot of people are going there in the summer. If they are determined to cause a problem they will probably go but we're continuing to prepare in the hope that it's not an issue."

Euro cash bonanza

Financially, UEFA expects to make a killing, which will benefit the entire European game. "The way we're working is way beyond anything that's been done before," says Olsson. "In the past, like FIFA with the World Cup, we handed over the competition to the local organiser. This is not the case now with Portugal because we are organising everything ourselves through a joint company, together with the Portuguese FA, and in which the Portuguese government has a share.

"This means we can be much more efficient. We have also taken the sale of the marketing rights in-house for the first time, so we are generating three times more income than in Holland and Belgium [for Euro 2000] – which can then be distributed through our new HatTrick programme. We will be handing over £250 million between the member associations over the coming four years. Nothing else in European sport

comes even close to that. FIFA is not even close to being able to match that, globally. And that is only money from the European Championship. Not the Champions League."

Champions League success

One of Aigner's more controversial legacies to his successor was unrest among Europe's top clubs over the trimming back of the second round of the Champions League to a single knockout format. But Olsson thinks it's already proved its worth. "The clubs were negative about taking the second group stage away," he says, "but, in financial terms, we are now making more money per match than we did in the old format. That shows that, despite a declining television market, the change of format was appreciated by the people who finance it – the TV companies."

Olsson knows that the clubs will always want as many games as possible because they represent income but he also believes, like FIFA president Sepp Blatter, that fans will not keep rolling up to watch matches in a tournament that lacks credibility.

This, of course, leads on to issues concerning both the UEFA Cup and FIFA's Club World Championship.

"We had to do something about the UEFA Cup," says Olsson, "because the economic value of the competition had been declining by 20 per cent per year over the last five years as the Champions League grew stronger. Once upon a time the Champions Cup was losing out compared with the UEFA Cup in popularity because there were more good teams in the UEFA Cup. Then the Champions League became more interesting than the UEFA Cup so now it is time for us to re-evaluate it and change it again with the group format next season.

"The Club World Championship is something else. It's interesting how quickly everything has changed. Originally, it was going to have 12 or 16 teams. Now it's down to six. That's more acceptable – though Europe has always argued against a Club World Championship because we don't think there is room for it in the calendar.

"Obviously, other people have different opinions – particularly in the other confederations. Of course, this is partly because we have such a developed club structure in Europe compared with other regions. Anyway, FIFA Congress took the decision and, since we accept the democratic process, we are not arguing against the Club World Championship any more. The one thing that was important for us was to trim the format, and that's been achieved."

Not just along for the ride...Portuguese mounted police take part in a security exercise in readiness for Euro 2004

'Hooliganism is always a worry but all else is in place. Now it is up to the players to make Euro 2004 a success'

Discussions over the international calendar appear to pass Olsson by. Europe had its own international calendar sorted a decade before FIFA got to work on the idea and some time before Aigner picked up the phone in 2000 and invited Olsson to move to Nyon as director of professional football and marketing. Had Aigner already handpicked Olsson as a possible successor back then? It's possible. Certainly, Olsson gives every impression that his previous role was almost an apprenticeship. He took over from Aigner on January 1, very neat, and nothing in the job has surprised him.

"Aigner deserves a lot of credit for turning this organisation into a modern machine," says Olsson. "He brought in a number of specialists – the biggest difference compared with four or five years ago, when UEFA was run by committees, which meant we had a very slow decision-making procedure."

Olsson has all the boxes ticked. The Intercontinental Cup will continue until 2006, with or without the Club World Championship, because UEFA has a contract with the Japanese FA, the South American confederation and the sponsors.

The new CEO gets his club feedback through the UEFA club forum. This means he can take a cool view of G-14, "an economic interest group but one which we will never recognise as a part of the formal football structure".

Another box is improving UEFA's mutually suspicious relationship with FIFA. Common sense has broken out behind the scenes, with the authorities co-ordinating control systems in their assistance programmes to see they are not ripped off.

It's called teamwork and, considering FIFA and UEFA have so much in common, not before time – though Olsson, out of loyalty, would not say it in so many words.

Set to stay?...Eriksson announces his contract extension

Eriksson's dilemma

The England manager is rewarded for his strange take on 'an ideal world'

"SVEN HAS THE master plan," said goalkeeper David James ahead of the friendly in Sweden and in the immediate aftermath of Eriksson's confirmation that he is staying with England until...well, 2006 or 2008? Even just this July? It depends what you believe and who you read.

Eriksson's master plan for his own career appears far more murkily labyrinthine than the one charted for his team.

After all, his England project appears to be running comparatively smoothly, give or take a few minor snags such as Rio Ferdinand's suspension and the prospective restriction of substitutes in friendlies.

But the whole Chelsea saga has been a PR and practical disaster for everyone.

Chelsea have had to start all over again in their search for a manager to replace poor Claudio 'hung-out-to-dry' Ranieri; the FA is being assaulted for quavering ineptitude in the face of rank disloyalty; and Eriksson is unhappy at having been trapped into committing himself to what may prove a marriage of inconvenience.

Personally, I think it's right he stays for now. But loyalty is a rare commodity in the relationship between football managers and their employers. For example, few will blame the FA for ditching Eriksson if results go awry in Portugal – and the Swede has handed everyone the ideal stick for beating him about the head in such a case.

Eriksson has double-dealt in the past with Fiorentina and Benfica and then again with Blackburn and Lazio. It's a track record at odds with the ice-man image. It also contrasts badly with his counterparts such as Portugal's Luiz Felipe Scolari and France's Jacques Santini.

'The whole Chelsea saga has been a PR disaster for everyone'

Scolari has been strongly linked with the vacant Turkey job and with Galatasaray (never mind the recent arrival of Gheorghe Hagi). His response: "I have a job to do with Portugal. After the Euro finals my contract is finished and then we'll see. Who knows? There's plenty of time. I don't have to hurry."

Of course, when you manage Brazil to win the World Cup you will never be short of job offers, whatever the time of year.

Santini, I have noted here before, is in an odd situation but has kept his counsel. The French federation does not want to commit to an extension for fear of another Lemerre-style faux pas. Yet Santini is surely due some sort of gesture after rescuing *Les Bleus* from the devastation that followed the humiliating retreat from Korea/Japan 2002.

He is also on about one-tenth of Eriksson's money – maybe even one-eleventh now that the FA have rewarded Sven for his indecision with further millions.

Secret meeting

Eriksson professed astonishment at being pushed to the brink of either dismissal or resignation by his 'secret' meeting with Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon. But he went to Kenyon's Belgravia pad in his FA car. What did he expect?

Eriksson is trailed by paparazzi all the time. Didn't he learn the lesson of his call on Roman Abramovich? Or, worse, didn't he care? In any case, isn't it up to potential suitors to go to him, rather than the other way around? That's another demeaning aspect of Eriksson's attitude to the England job that rankled.

This is not a club job. That's the problem. There are issues of national pride and loyalty that Eriksson has strangely yet to grasp.

He says: "I was not close to joining Chelsea but I was listening. When clubs come to talk and you have ambition then you listen to other jobs. You should be allowed to do that even if you are England manager."

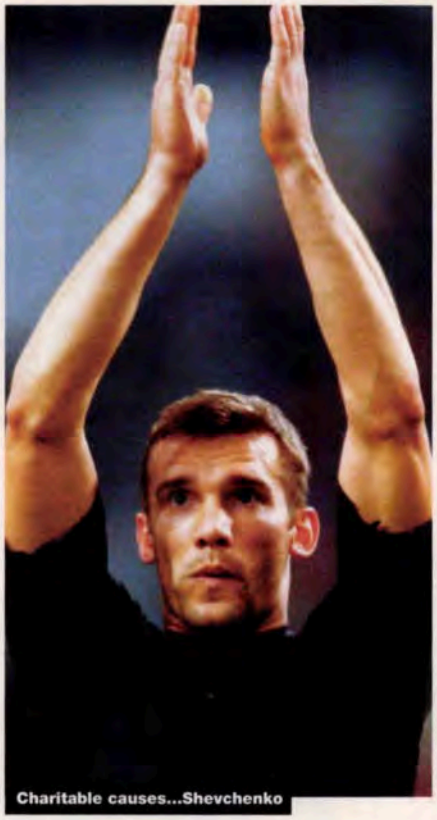
Listen, fine. But don't go running after them. Eriksson, with his track record, like Scolari, does not need to. Or doesn't he know that? Maybe those rimless glasses mask a core of raging insecurity.

Eriksson says that "in an ideal world" he would prefer to have waited until after Euro 2004. An ideal world? Where has he been living? This is football.

Andrii's example

Footballers off the pitch are not merely fodder for the scandal sheets. Andrii Shevchenko proves the role-model point. Milan's top scorer acted on learning that a Ukrainian child had been sent to Genoa for urgent treatment after kidney failure.

Specialists diagnosed the need for a kidney transplant so Shevchenko set about raising funds by auctioning some of his collection of valuable watches as well as shirts and boots. Any monies left over, he has directed, will go to Chernobyl victim-support charities.



Charitable causes...Shevchenko

What about Marco?

Missed off list...Van Basten

WHEN PELE GETS involved in PR exercises, whether on his own behalf or for some football authority, he usually takes sensible advice. One wonders what went wrong with his now infamous "100 living greats".

The first list he produced apparently contained 110 names and the second was expanded to 125 after Edson Arantes do Nascimento and his team hurried to placate Brazilian fans over the initial absences of the likes of Nilton Santos.

For Europeans the major absentee was Marco Van Basten. My understanding is that the Dutchman was reluctant to be drawn into the commercial photographic venture for the coffee-table book that underpinned the project.

Good for him. Of course, Van Basten may also have objected to being brought down to the same level as, for example, El Hadji Diouf. The Liverpool man may qualify for the pantheon one day but he has a long way to go yet.

London's Natural History Museum was an appropriate venue for FIFA's celebratory party. Like many of the exhibits, this particular one ended up well stuffed.

Grounds for hope in Italy

Amid all the chaos in *calcio* there may be grounds for hope, literally. The tottering giants have finally woken up to the realisation that one strand of the answer to financial stability may lie at their feet – their own stadia.

Most of the clubs in Serie A and Serie B are in financial freefall largely through their own direct fault or through the contributing mismanagement of parent companies such as Cirio with Lazio and Parmalat with Parma.

But swapping stories around the G-14 table has helped opened up some eyes. As Juventus executive Roberto Bettega once told me: "Italy's municipally-owned stadia give us back no commercial income and cannot be used to guarantee bank loans. We have to change the system but it will take a lot of time."

Juventus are buying out their own lease at the awful Stadio delle Alpi and other clubs in other cities, notably Milan and Rome, are following their lead. There is light at the end of the tunnel which may allow the clubs to compete honestly in the high-wage international transfer market.

"The day of the municipal stadium has long gone," says Adriano Galliani, chief executive of current European champions Milan. "We are 50 years behind many other countries."

Stadia refurbishment comes far down the financial priorities for local politicians. That lack of investment is reflected in Italy's absence from the 20-strong list of five-star stadia to which UEFA allots its annual showpiece club Finals.

Juve plan to refashion the Delle Alpi into a commercially and socially sensitive venue better suited to the maximum 40,000 capacity they really need. Ground-share neighbours Torino are off back to the old Comunale permanently, as long as they can find a new owner (Russians welcome).

To the east Milan and Internazionale have formed a development consortium with the city council and the landowner of the Stadio Meazza.

"We want to turn the Stadio Meazza into a family-friendly arena," says Aldo Brandirali, the council's sports assessor.

In Rome negotiations over the historic Stadio Olimpico stagnated for years because of the differing agendas of both the city and the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), the country's supreme sports authority. Now the recent derby chaos and the financial plight of tenants Roma and Lazio have forced a rush to realism.

The clubs have thus joined CONI and the city on board a new company to manage not only the stadium but also the entire Foro Italico sports complex.

The recent 'rich list' from Deloitte & Touche noted that matchday income among the biggest Italian clubs runs at a third of the level of the English Premiership. Now, at last, that is being addressed.

Whether it is being addressed in time is another matter.

FOOTBALL MEMORIES

Brian Glanville on the crowd-pulling, defence-tormenting career of Stanley Matthews

Born to swerve

Wizard of the dribble...yet Matthews was frequently snubbed by England

IN NOVEMBER 1934, the 19-year-old Stanley Matthews played his second international for England. It was at Highbury against Italy; a game, if you could call it that, destined to go down in football history as The Battle of Highbury.

The ruthless, often brutal, Italy centre-half Luisito Monti went off the field in agony after a clash with England centre-forward Ted Drake, telling coach Vittorio Pozzo "he kicked me deliberately". This seemed most doubtful, especially after a mere 90 seconds, but the Italians believed it and proceeded in Pozzo's words to "retaliate".

With fists and elbows flying, it was hardly the ideal occasion for a player with the delicate skills, the wonderful swerve of Matthews. Next day, Geoffrey Simpson wrote in the *Daily Mail*: "I saw Matthews play just as moderately in the recent inter-League match, exhibiting the same slowness and hesitation. Perhaps he lacks the big-match temperament."

Twenty-two years later, at the age of 41, the player who supposedly lacked big-match temperament was still good enough to run rings around one of the best defenders in the world, Brazil's Nilton Santos.

The charge against Matthews by then was a different one. In the dressing-room he told me how tired he was of reading in the press that he was too old. "Sometimes I want to tear the paper across," he said.

Matthews played in the first professional match I ever watched when, as a 10-year-old, in January 1942, my father took me to Wembley to see England beat Scotland 3-0. Matthews by then was an idol, yet the deep English mistrust of individual brilliance would plague him throughout his career.

Full-back's nightmare

There was never any doubt about his talents, the way he could torment even the finest full-back. An inclination of the body to the left putting the defender off balance, a swerve to the right, a sudden burst of pace, and he was away. "Don't ask me how I do it," Matthews once said about that swerve. "It just comes out under pressure."

'An inclination of the body to the left putting the defender off balance, a swerve to the right, a sudden burst of pace, and he was away'

Yet, astonishingly, he found himself in the late 1940s a prophet without honour in his own country and even his home town. Stoke had been his club since he joined them as an office boy from school, though during the war, when he served in the RAF, he played largely as a guest for Blackpool. But for some reason Stoke manager Bob McGrory bitterly resented Matthews and even dropped him at the start of the 1946-47 season.

The following May, Matthews was still good enough to play for Great Britain in their 6-1 hammering of a Rest of Europe team. Shortly after that he officially joined Blackpool, with whom he would play in three FA Cup Finals. The last of them, in May 1953 against Bolton, brought him his only winners' medal.

In October 1961, famously and romantically, Matthews went back to Stoke. He took me and manager Tony Waddington out to lunch. "You must have butterflies," he said, meaning that even at his age, he needed that flutter of apprehension before a match. And so it was, a few days later, before his second debut for Stoke. Standing beside him in the dressing-room before kick-off, I asked him a question. "I'm not really with you at the moment, Brian," he replied.

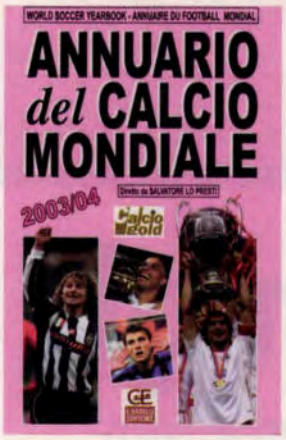
It used to be reckoned, in the years after the war, that when Blackpool came to London, Matthews' presence would put 10,000 on the gate. Yet time and again the England selectors would snub him.

Just before the 1950 World Cup in Brazil, he was touring North America with an FA party, having been omitted from the World Cup squad. Belatedly he was recalled but had only one match, against Spain in Rio, when England were beaten 1-0 and knocked out. Would it have been very different had he played in the previous traumatic game against the USA in Belo Horizonte? Perhaps, yet a team containing Finney, Mannion and Mortensen should surely have sailed through without trouble.

50 up...Matthews' birthday at Stoke

BOOK OF THE MONTH

The latest edition of the *Annuario del Calcio Mondiale*, edited by Salvatore Lo Presti, is now available. It remains the best reference guide to the Italian game and has an excellent international section.



FOOTBALL LINGO

#3 Aile de pigeon

It says a great deal about English football that the only term we have for a trick is 'nutmeg'. In France, 'aile de pigeon' – literally, pigeon's wing – is the term used to describe the move where a player flicks the ball over his head, *a la* Zinedine Zidane.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
MAY 1990

Milan were the overwhelming favourites to retain their European title as they prepared to face Benfica in the Champions Cup Final in Vienna 14 years ago.

Benfica, coached by Sven Goran Eriksson, had done well to overcome Marseille in the semi-finals, but Milan were generally recognised to be the best club side in the world.

"Porto surprised us all in the same match, in this same stadium, three years ago against Bayern Munich," wrote Keir Radnedge in his match preview. "But for all Benfica's talent, and for all Milan's battle scars, another Italian victory looks the likeliest outcome."

Indeed, Milan retained their title, winning 1-0 thanks to Frank Rijkaard's second-half goal.

QUIZ

mitre

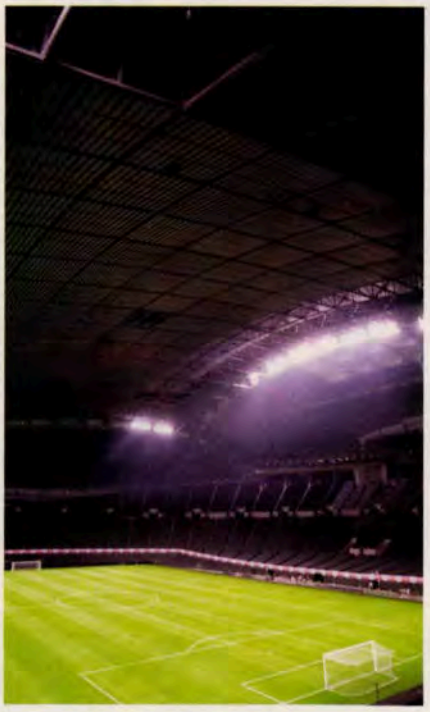
WIN a top-quality Mitre football

Mitre has kindly donated a top-quality football for this month's Quiz. The first correct entry selected at random after May 7 will win the ball.

SEND YOUR ENTRY, ON A POSTCARD, TO:
MAY QUIZ, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS

THIS MONTH'S POSER

Name the famous stadium pictured



MARCH QUIZ WINNER

Nathan Paterson, Leeds

We asked you to identify the stadium from the picture clue

ANSWER
La Bombonera, home to Boca Juniors

Canaries fly high

Norwich are on the brink of a return to the top division. Howard Johnson reports

ENGLAND

LET'S START WITH the biggest cliche in the book, then. It's October 1993, and little old, yellow old Norwich City are punching way, way above their weight. Manager Mike Walker, a rather dour, silver-haired, pursed-lipped individual, has somehow inspired East Anglia's second-finest to the dizzying heights of European competition in the UEFA Cup. The Canaries are taking on the full might of German uber-power Bayern Munich in their own back yard. Jeremy Goss, blond and curly of hair, high of forehead and chunky of thigh, becomes the unlikeliest-looking hero in the club's history when he rifles home a fierce 20-yard volley. Walker's side go on to win 2-1, then hold on for a 1-1 draw at home in the second leg to put the Germans out. It's official. Norwich City are playing with the big boys, then beating them. A golden age surely beckons.

Except, clearly, it doesn't. Flushed with success and his head filled with dreams, Walker quits the Canaries to take over at a 'bigger club', Everton. He makes an almighty Horlicks of it at Goodison. If his hair hadn't already been silver it would have turned grey overnight, so out of his depth is he. Everton are soon forced to admit the error of their ways and get rid of him. His top-class managerial career is snuffed out in an instant.

Battle for supremacy...Norwich take on West Bromwich in a top-of-the-table First Division game

'Ha, bloody ha. Serves you right, you traitorous wretch,' say several thousand Norwich supporters. Unfortunately, though, Walker's fall from grace is only mirrored by the tumble from the top of their own club. Norwich, once a fixture of England's top flight, plummet out of the glamour division and fade into obscurity as far as the big, wide world is concerned.

Now for the next cliche, Delia Smith. Having joined the board in November 1996 and eventually assuming the role of majority shareholder, the mumsy TV cookery queen with a huge culinary following has revitalised sleepy Norwich – who had slipped to mid-First Division obscurity – with her boundless enthusiasm, understanding of how to manipulate the media, shrewd business sense and, of course, her pies.

Norwich's matchday catering is now acknowledged as the best in the game thanks to the weaving of Delia's magic, but it's away from the kitchen where she's really hotted things up. Smith's got deep pockets – her injection of £500,000 into the club via a recent share offer is only the tip of the iceberg – but it's her free-thinking, revenue-generating initiatives that have convinced Norwich they can be a competitive top-flight club again. Witness the recent Delia-inspired launch of The Business, a club based at the ground where for £1,500 a season business types will be able to hob-nob with their peers and do deals over lunch before a game.

"It's another way in which a football club can develop its links with the business community," Smith said. "We want to make it the place where business people can meet, network and get to know each other. When the football is good it certainly helps. But if you build up structures like these, they'll serve you well even when things aren't going quite so well on the pitch."

Not that Norwich have been underperforming on the turf of late. Quite the opposite, in fact. Under Nigel Worthington, coincidentally another silver-haired, pursed-lipped manager, the Canaries have been revitalised and rejuvenated. They're playing a neat and attractive brand of attacking football and look set fair for the Premiership. The Christmas present arrival of Darren Huckerby from Manchester City has given the attack a timely boost and his goals have helped Norwich stay in the box seat.

Those goals have been doubly vital given Matthias Svensson's poor form, which he discussed brilliantly recently. "I can't put my finger on the problem," he said. "But for some reason I can't seem to get my feet going at the moment." Which is always a tricky one, though not as tricky as the club's precarious financial position over the past decade. For that reason alone promotion is obviously hugely important.

"There's £30million staring you in the face if you get to the Premiership...£30m," says Smith. "We're *that* close to bringing in that money." Last year's deal to sell off part of the club's car parking facilities to a housing developer for £6m in order to finance the redevelopment of the club's South Stand is just one example of her canny business acumen.

Mind you, down in East Anglia they're making sure they don't get too carried away. But then again, maybe that's not too surprising when one of the

Driving force and No 1 fan...Delia Smith

Norwich online fanzines, Carrowroad.net, rejoices in the hilariously downbeat sell-line of 'For sensible discussion about football.'

At least Delia Smith has some passion for the Canaries' cause, though. If Norwich do go on to the Premiership there'll be absolutely nothing sensible about her. "Given how tough it's all been," she says, "I think I would burst into tears."

EUROPE

The Royal assent

A Scandinavian league gets the go-ahead from UEFA

Crown princes...the likes of Rosenborg and Brondby can expect to contest the League

SCANDINAVIAN SOCCER IS about to be revolutionised by the creation of a new Royal League, which will feature the top four clubs from Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

The tournament will take place each winter after receiving official UEFA sanction, with the primary motivation a desire to improve standards of Scandinavian clubs.

Matches will take place on or around the dates of Champions League and UEFA Cup fixtures. It will begin in November, and feature two group stages, with the Final in April.

Some games, particularly in Norway and Sweden, may be played in indoor halls because of the weather.

Copenhagen's Parken stadium, with its sliding roof, will also be a venue for a tournament that has won significant commercial and TV backing.

UEFA had initial concerns about the proximity of matches to its two major club competitions and the fact the Royal League might be a back-door method of creating a regional super-league. Previous ideas floated in that area, like the so-called Atlantic League, were rejected.

What appears to have mollified the European body this time is that the new event will be separate from the existing national championships. Also, winning the Royal League may be financially lucrative, but it will not lead to qualification for European competition.

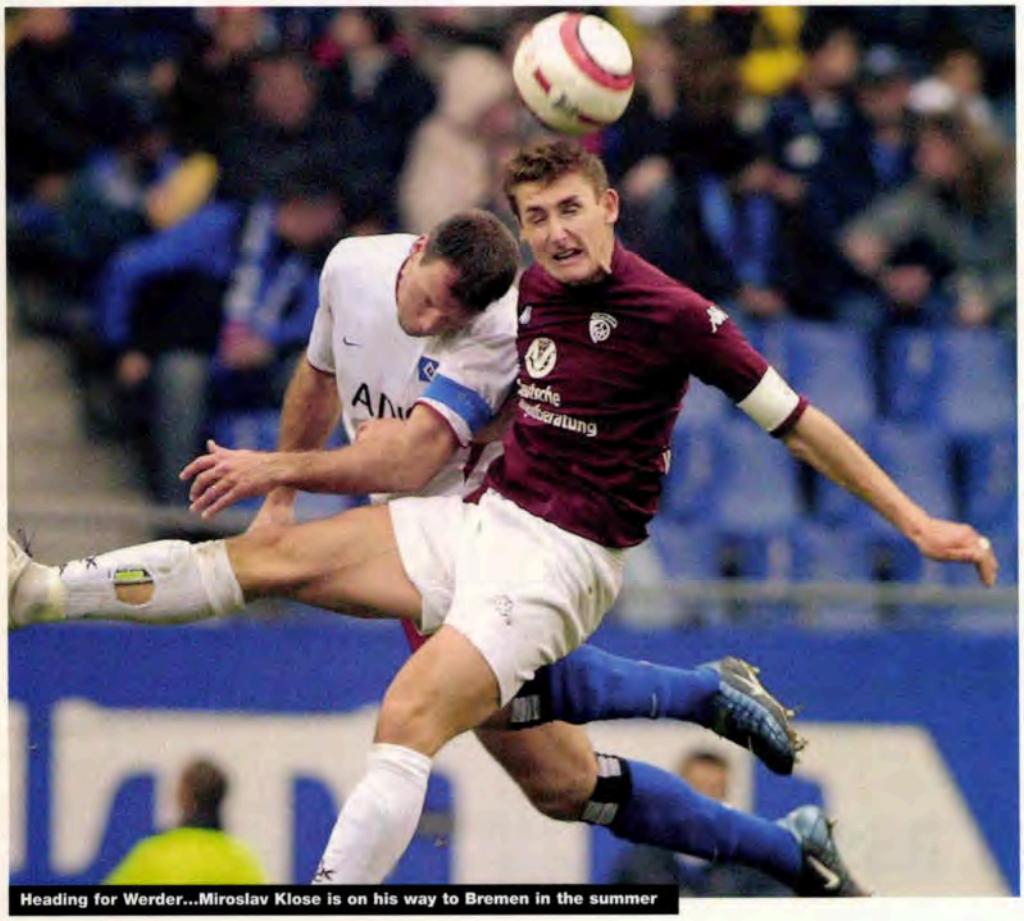
The top clubs themselves back the new tournament as a method of improving standards, enabling them to compete more effectively in the Champions League and UEFA Cup. That is exactly the motivation of clubs like Celtic who were in the vanguard of the Atlantic League concept.

All in all, the Royal League will be a footballing experiment that could have profound implications for the future of European soccer.

Jim Holden

Werder close in on Klose

GERMANY



Heading for Werder...Miroslav Klose is on his way to Bremen in the summer

RUNAWAY LEAGUE LEADERS Werder Bremen have lined up a replacement for Schalke-bound Ailton, signing national team striker Miroslav Klose from Kaiserslautern in a £3.3million deal.

Klose declared that apart from the attraction of Champions League football with Werder, he was also sold on his new club by Germany coach Rudi Voller, a Werder goalscoring hero in the1980s.

"Rudi Voller thought it would be a good move for me," said Klose, who is expected to earn an estimated £1.5m a year over the four seasons of his deal. "He spoke highly of Werder. It was an important factor in my decision."

Klose may well be joining a Double-winning side. Inspired by the vision of rejuvenated French playmaker Johan Micoud and the obduracy of his fellow countryman Valerien Ismael in central defence, Werder were a country mile clear at the top of the Bundesliga at the end of March and also in the German Cup Final. Promising Paraguayan attacker Nelson Valdez scored an extra-time winner in a thrilling 3-2 semi-final encounter with plucky Second Division outfit Lubeck to book Werder's place.

They will meet Alemannia Aachen, another Bundesliga 2 side, who followed up their shock quarter-final win over Bayern Munich with another elite scalp. Borussia Monchengladbach were beaten 1-0 courtesy of a well-struck free-kick from midfielder Ivica Grilic.

The 2003-04 season will certainly not be remembered with any affection by Bayern Munich fans. After a spirited but ultimately unsuccessful showing in both legs of their 2-1 aggregate loss to Real Madrid in the second round of the Champions League, the Bavarians were talking of one last, concerted bid to overhaul Werder in the championship race. However, they were held 3-3 at home by a Hansa Rostock side built with a fraction of Bayern's millions, and then could only draw, 1-1, at relegation-threatened Hertha Berlin.

A campaign without trophies has led to speculation about the future of Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, whose contract runs to June 2005. Rumours persist that Stuttgart boss Felix Magath could soon be on his way to the club, though whether his sergeant-major style would be suited to Bayern's galaxy of superstars is open to question.

The first-team squad is bound to change considerably too. High-profile departures are on the cards (Brazilian midfielder Ze Roberto and Paraguayan attacker Roque Santa Cruz could lead the flight), while the summer recruitment drive is already mapped out. A top central defender such as Leverkusen's Brazilian Lucio is a priority, as is Dortmund's versatile midfielder Torsten Frings, while Argentinian forward Carlos Tevez is still being pursued despite the Boca Juniors forward recently rejecting such a move.

Challenging times ahead at Bayern. And also less remunerative ones. The club intend to cut salaries by 15 to 20 per cent.

Nick Bidwell

AUSTRIA

Low out at leaders

League champions Austria Wien sacked coach Joachim Low following a humiliating 2-0 defeat by bottom-of-the-table Karnten. Although the club clung on to top spot on goal difference from Grazer AK, the loss was the final straw for president Frank Stronach.

"The team's poor displays in the past few weeks, both technically and tactically, have called out for a stronger appointment – our sporting director, Mr [Gunter] Kronsteiner," said the Austro-Canadian billionaire, whose side had won only two games out of six since the winter break.

"Mr Kronsteiner will now also take over our coaching affairs and manage the team modelled on the English example, where clubs are guided by a sporting manager," Stronach added.

The writing had been on the wall for Low after the president insisted in February that Kronsteiner sat alongside the coach during matches to oversee his work. Low, who won the championship with FC Tirol in 2002 and led Stuttgart to the Cup-winners Cup Final in 1998, duly refused to co-operate with the sporting director.

Kronsteiner is Austria Wien's fourth coach in two seasons and was previously in charge of Salzburg. There, he failed to meet the high expectations of another millionaire boss, Egon Putzi, and was replaced by Swede Hans Backe after just half a season.

Harry Miltner

Standard's drop

BELGIUM

STANDARD LIEGE WERE facing severe punishment from the FA following a post-match fracas after the recent goalless draw at Gent. Incensed by the refusal of a penalty appeal, player agent Luciano D'Onofrio, the brother of Standard coach Dominique D'Onofrio, knocked out a steward and threatened referee Joeri Van de Velde as the teams left the field. "I will put a bullet through your head," he admitted telling the official at a press conference he called four days later.

Standard striker Emile Mpenza was also involved in the disgraceful post-match events, kicking a hole in a door on his way to the dressing-room. Mpenza had been involved in the 'penalty' incident, when he appeared to be brought down in the box by David Van Hoyweghen. The Gent defender later admitted committing a foul.

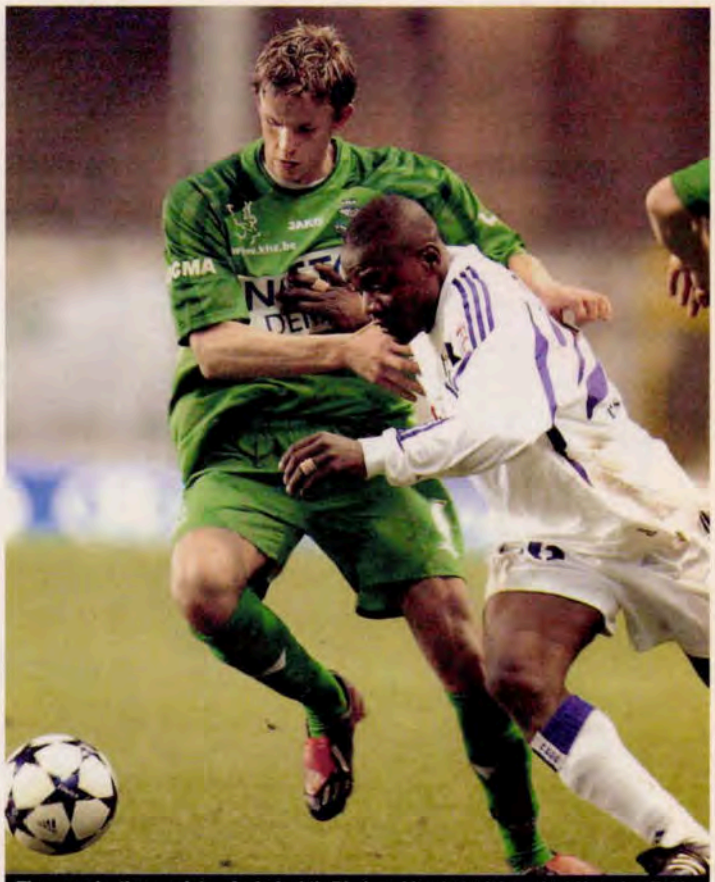
In recent weeks, Standard have become increasingly frustrated as they saw their chances of securing a Champions League berth slip away. At one stage they were well clear in second place, but Club Brugge have gradually whittled away their 11-point deficit to overtake the Liege side.

Anderlecht, meanwhile, stayed on course for the title by thrashing lowly Heusden-Zolder 6-0, with Aruna Dindane hitting a hat-trick.

Club Brugge were beaten 4-1 on aggregate by Bordeaux in the UEFA Cup, but gained some consolation by reaching the Belgian Cup Final with a 3-2 aggregate win over Mouscron.

They will meet Beveren, who beat Anderlecht on away goals in the other semi. The underdogs drew 1-1 in Brussels and held the League leaders to a goalless draw in the return, though Anderlecht felt they had had a legitimate goal disallowed in the second leg. TV replays showed that Nenad Jestrovic's late header had crossed the line before being hooked clear by Djire Abdoulaye.

Nicholas Harling



Three goals, three points...Anderlecht's Dindane hit a hat-trick against Heusden-Zolder

Exit door opens at PSV

HOLLAND

THE FUTURE LOOKS gloomy for PSV Eindhoven, last season's champions. Not only have they squandered almost every chance of picking up silverware this term, but they also face an exodus of players over the summer. Winger Arjen Robben is a definite departee, after agreeing a £13million deal with Chelsea, with other likely movers being keeper Ronald Waterreus, midfielder Mark Van Bommel and forward Mateja Kezman. Waterreus is considering a move to the USA, while the latter pair are also keen to leave Holland, feeling they have achieved all they can in Eindhoven.

On the pitch, PSV looked to have blown any chance of the League title after losing to Feyenoord and drawing with NAC Breda in successive home games. A subsequent defeat away to Willem II allowed leaders Ajax to go 12 points clear with seven games left.

NAC had beaten PSV in the Dutch Cup, knocking them out in the quarter-finals in February. So now the Eindhoven club have only the UEFA Cup to focus on, following their 4-1 aggregate defeat of Auxerre in the fourth round.

NAC stumbled in the next round of the domestic Cup, losing on penalties to FC Twente. In the Final, the Enschede side will meet holders Utrecht, who also needed penalties to overcome Sparta Rotterdam in their semi.

Foppe De Haan has decided his next move following his 20 years on the Heerenveen coaching staff. He has announced he will take charge of several of the national youth teams, including the Olympic side aiming to qualify for the Beijing Games in 2008.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

PSV peak...Kezman and Van Bommel win the 2003 title

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Byrne quick off the mark

Jason Byrne, the League top scorer last season, got off the mark on the first day of the new campaign, hitting the only goal as Shelbourne opened the defence of their title with a home win over Shamrock Rovers.

There will be no promotion/relegation play-offs at the end of this season, and the Premier Division is to be expanded to 12 teams from 10 for 2005.

Telecommunications company Eircom have agreed to continue sponsoring the FAI until at least 2008.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Vaduz hit winning run

FC Vaduz made a sensational start to the second half of the Swiss Challenge League (Second Division) season, winning five straight games to go within five points of leaders Chiasso.

Walter Hormann, Vaduz's former coach, lasted less than three months at Salzburg in Austria after picking up just one point in his four games in charge.

Graeme Crawford

One for the cabinet...Livingston celebrate their League Cup victory over Hibernian

Livi come alive

SCOTLAND

LIVINGSTON WON THE first major trophy in their short history when beating Hibernian 2-0 in the League Cup Final at Hampden Park. The victory came despite the club's recent financial problems, which had forced them to terminate the contracts of several players and cut the wages of others.

'Livi' were created from the ashes of defunct Edinburgh side Meadowbank Thistle 10 years ago and embarked on a journey that took them from the lower divisions all the way to the Premier League. Last season they even sampled European football at their compact Almondvale stadium, in what was once the footballing backwater of West Lothian.

The Hampden game was the first major domestic Cup Final without the involvement of either Celtic or Rangers for seven years. Rangers also exited the Scottish Cup – at the hands of Celtic, in the last eight – and trailed their Old Firm rivals by 19 points at the end of March after another loss to Celtic. This means last term's Treble winners will win nothing this season.

Alan Fairley

DENMARK

Brondby hit for six

The first day of the spring League campaign produced the most extraordinary result in the history of the professional Superliga, as leaders Brondby were thrashed 6-1 at home by second-placed Esbjerg. It was the first time Brondby had conceded six goals at home since 1977, when they were a Third Division club, making it their worst home defeat in the Superliga.

Esbjerg's new Swedish signing Fredrik Berglund hit a hat-trick, and by the end Brondby were relieved the humiliation wasn't even worse.

The goal glut put Esbjerg ahead of Brondby on goal difference, and they went clear following a thrilling 3-3 draw at home to AGF the next week, as Brondby lost again, 1-0 away to OB Odense.

Defending champions FC Copenhagen took advantage of the leading pair's dropped points, closing to within two points of Esbjerg after victories against Frem and Midtjylland.

Jim Holden

FINLAND

Jokerit RIP

FC Jokerit's short, somewhat sad existence came to an end after owner Harry Harkimo was forced to sell his club to local rivals HJK Helsinki.

The financial burden of running a club with little or no hope for the future became unbearable, and when it was clear Harkimo could not find a foreign club with which to link, he surrendered to the League champions.

Jokerit began with a fanfare five years ago, aiming to dethrone HJK as Helsinki's leading club. But as one local journalist wrote: "Only a few years ago Harkimo looked like eating HJK's chairman Olli-Pekka Lyytikainen for breakfast. It turned out Lyytikainen enjoyed FC Jokerit for dessert!"

HJK will turn Jokerit into their youth academy, with the club playing in the Second Division, two rungs below the top flight.

The future of Jokerit coach Pasi Rautiainen is uncertain. Although he is a very popular figure in Finland, this is not necessarily the case at HJK, even though he was one of their best players. Rautiainen says: "I was the first and last coach of FC Jokerit. This is all very sad for me. I won't get over this in a week or two."

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

First blood to IA

Cup-holders IA swept aside champions KR 3-0 in the Super Cup to lift the first serious domestic silverware of the season. All three goals came in the first half of a decidedly one-sided game.

KR keeper Kristjan Finnbogason, 32, was recalled to the Iceland squad for the March friendly against Albania after an absence of almost six years. The decision highlights the difficulty of finding a steady deputy for first-choice Arni Gautur Arason. Since Finnbogason last played for his country no fewer than eight players apart from Arason have worn the No 1 jersey, but none has staked his claim for a regular place.

England coach Sven Goran Eriksson has agreed to become patron of the soccer academy formed 18 months ago by former Iceland international Arnor Gudjohnsen. The Swede has also offered to act as a technical consultant.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Flora wilt at last

Flora Tallinn's 18-month unbeaten League run was ended by city rivals Levadia just a week into the new championship campaign.

The title holders had also dropped points in their opening game, a 0-0 draw at Tulevik Viljandi, making it by their standards a poor start to the season. Last year Flora dropped only eight points during the whole 28-game campaign.

"The start could hardly have been better, especially considering last season's series of losses to Flora," said Levadia coach Tarmo Ruutli after his side's 2-0 win at the champions.

Andres Must

WALES

Rhyl hit the top

Rhyl's 2-1 win at Welshpool Town put them top of the League and extended their unbeaten run to 24 games as long-time leaders Total Network Solutions lost 3-1 at home to Caersws.

Cwmbran's Chris Summers set a Welsh record when scoring in 11 consecutive League matches.

Barry Town look doomed to fill the one relegation place this season, trailing second-bottom Carmarthen Town by nine points at the end of March.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Managers fight during mass brawl

Roy McCready and Marty Quinn, managers of Newry Town and holders Coleraine respectively, were set to receive hefty punishment after coming to blows in a mass brawl during their Irish Cup quarter-final. Coleraine captain Pat McAllister, who butted McCready during the melee, was subsequently handed a massive 15-match ban.

The match ended in a 1-1 draw, and the two managers attempted a damage-limitation exercise before the replay at Coleraine, publicly apologising and shaking hands in front of the cameras. The home side won through 3-1.

There were ugly incidents during two of the other quarter-finals. Glentoran keeper Elliott Morris was pelted with bottles, coins and golf balls by Linfield fans at Windsor Park during Glens' 1-0 victory. And referee Adrian McCourt was manhandled by an Ards fan after his side lost 2-1 at home to Omagh Town.

Former Northern Ireland international Michael O'Neill has been forced to quit Glentoran after failing to overcome a series of injuries.

Roy Kitson

Troubled...Sypniewski

Igor out of focus

SWEDEN

MALMO'S PRE-SEASON preparations have been disrupted by problems with new Polish forward Igor Sypniewski.

Bought as a replacement for Gothenburg-bound Peter Ijeh, Sypniewski was a major success with Halmstads last year. However, he has been in and out of Malmo's first team during their warm-up campaign, seemingly unable to focus on his football.

"Igor is having a bad time," says coach Tom Prahl. "He is depressed and I believe he needs medical help."

Defending champions Djurgardens, now bereft of key midfielder Kim Kallstrom, have also been misfiring during the close season, with Dutch forward Geert Den Ouden particularly coming in for some sharp criticism.

AIK's title challenge will be boosted by the return of World Cup striker Andreas Andersson, fit again after being sidelined by injury since last July.

Orebro's £1million debts mean they risk losing their League licence.

Pentti Hietanen

Rosenborg squeezed out

NORWAY

CHAMPIONS ROSENBORG FAILED narrowly to reach the last 16 of the UEFA Cup, going out on away goals to Benfica. The Trondheim club followed up their 1-0 defeat in Lisbon by taking an early 2-0 lead in the return. However, a goal from Nuno Gomes, who was later sent off for diving, was enough to put the Portuguese side through.

Norway's other remaining representatives, Valerenga, managed to hold Newcastle to a 1-1 draw in Oslo but lost 3-1 in the return.

National coach Age Hareide called up John Carew and John Arne Riise for the March friendly against Serbia & Montenegro, the first time the pair had been included since their punch-up in Oslo last autumn. Midfielder Ardian Gashi was also called up, on the back of his good form for Valerenga.

Sigurd Odegaard

Best foot forward...Rosenborg on the attack against Benfica

Fener outstrip sinking Besiktas

TURKEY

Flying spirit...Marcio Nobre, one of Fenerbahce's top performers, is sent sprawling by Gala's Orhan Ak during the Istanbul derby

FENERBAHCE ACHIEVED SOMETHING that had been unthinkable at the start of the spring League campaign by opening up a six-point lead over defending champions Besiktas, having been 11 points behind them at the break.

Consistently strong performances from Pierre Van Hooijdonk, Tuncay Sanli and Marcio Nobre have clearly contributed to Fener's resurgence, though overall Christoph Daum's team have hardly been stellar. But at least as important has been Besiktas's paranoid, strife-ridden capitulation that has left them now struggling even to fend off Trabzonspor's challenge for second place and a valuable Champions League berth.

The turning point for the haughty Black Eagles came during the home game against Samsunspor in late January, which had to be abandoned after Besiktas had five players sent off by a trigger-happy referee.

The hysterical dugout performance of normally calm coach Mircea Lucescu highlighted the distance he had fallen from the cool heights he inhabited last year and the season before with Galatasaray. Convinced that the authorities, keen to placate cash-laden Fenerbahce, had it in for Besiktas, Lucescu presided over an increasingly confused team lacking direction. In the 26th round, when Fener were beating Bursaspor 3-1, Besiktas went down by the same score to Diyarbakirspor.

Many feel that Besiktas have brought all this trouble on themselves. The worsening relationship between the players and officials, and the club's ill-fated decision to sell striker Ilhan Mansiz to Japan's Vissel Kobe during the winter break without finding a suitable replacement were just two of the factors working against them.

Fatih Terim, Lucescu's ever-tinkering successor at Galatasaray, was unceremoniously sacked after suffering one loss too many during what has been a dismal season. The 2-1 derby defeat by Fener at the end of February was one of the nails in Terim's coffin. His replacement, former star player Gheorghe Hagi, took the reins with Gala 19 points behind Fenerbahce and with just eight games remaining.

Almost simultaneously, national coach Senol Gunes, that other high priest of Turkish football success, also lost his head and refused to leave his post quietly. The day after the end of his contract was announced – in the wake of the Euro 2004 play-off defeat by Latvia – Gunes reportedly turned up for work claiming that he had not been officially notified and would they please put through his phone calls as usual. Amid rumours that he was lobbying for unpaid monies, it was not long before he received his official dismissal.

Suna Erdem

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

FA in mourning over Bulatovic murder

Branko Bulatovic, the FA general secretary, has died after being shot in the head outside the association's headquarters in Belgrade on March 26.

Bulatovic, 53, was rushed to hospital but emergency surgery failed to save him. The unknown gunman escaped and so far no motive for the killing has emerged.

FA president Dragan Stojkovic said: "I am shocked and enraged. We have lost a dear friend and this is a severe blow to our soccer and our society. But more than anything it is devastating for his family, and our thoughts are with them."

Ilija Petkovic, the national coach, who was first on the scene and attended to the wounded Bulatovic, added: "It was Serbo-Montenegrin football that was shot at. It is as if the shots were aimed at every one of us."

The weekend's domestic games were postponed as a mark of respect.

New Sartid coach Zvonko Varga was sacked after only four games and replaced by Milenko Kikovic, who guided the club to Cup Final victory over Red Star last season.

An investigation has been launched after Sutjeska's 2-1 win over OFK Belgrade in March was alleged to have been fixed.

Vladimir Novak

GREECE

Alefantos hoofs it back to the helm

Olympiakos caused a surprise when announcing that veteran coach Nikos Alefantos would take charge until the end of the season following the dismissal of Ukrainian Oleg Protasov.

The outspoken 64-year-old had not coached for two and a half years since leaving Ethnikos Astir, but was preferred by the Olympiakos board to assistant coach Sinisa Gogic. It is Alefantos's third spell at the Piraeus club's helm.

Protasov, in charge for 13 months and who led Olympiakos to a record seventh straight League title last season, was sacked two days after a 1-0 home defeat by AEK Athens. This knocked them off top spot for the first time this season, letting in rivals Panathinaikos.

Lou Economopoulos

CROATIA

Bracun: one-game wonder

Coach Milivoj Bracun set an unwanted Croatian record when being fired after just one game in charge of FC Zagreb. The dismissal, following a 0-0 draw with Osijek, was one of the first acts of newly-appointed club president Drazen Medic. He had criticised Bracun's faith in veteran Robert Prosinecki, saying: "He hasn't the strength to play a single half."

Bracun, previously with unheralded Slovenian side Koper Sport, was the club's third coach this season. His successor is Mile Petkovic, who faces the task of lifting the 2002 champions away from the bottom end of the table.

There have been further allegations of corruption in domestic football, with Inker coach Josip Kuze making one of the more lurid accusations. He said: "I got a red card against Varteks because I told the referee he was a prostitute. But I apologise to those ladies, who are honourable when compared with the prices of Croatian referees!"

Zvonimir Soldo has rejected a plea by national coach Otto Baric to come out of international retirement in order to bolster an understrength midfield at Euro 2004. The 37-year-old Stuttgart captain quit after the 2002 World Cup.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Siroki Brijeg go for glory

Siroki Brijeg, from the small town of the same name in Herzegovina, are in pole position for their first national title after taking a seven-point lead over defending champions Leotar with 11 rounds to play. The club are one of the best organised in the League and, most importantly, the only one without debts.

Leotar's poor recent performances prompted coach Milan Jovin to resign. He has been replaced by his assistant, Vladimir Gacinovic.

In other coaching changes Posusje's Marijo Cutuk resigned, to be replaced by Igor Jelavic, while Husnija Arapovic succeeded Kemal Hafizovic at lowly Celik.

National team captain Mirsad Hibic has announced his international retirement at the age of 30. His last game will be the friendly against Finland in late April.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Stratev steps down

Zoran Stratev has resigned as coach of champions Vardar after his side slipped from top to fourth place having taken only eight points from nine League games either side of the winter break.

It was a sudden fall from grace for the 2003 Coach of the Year. Having taken charge last summer Stratev led Vardar to the brink of qualification for the Champions League group stage – an unprecedented achievement for a Macedonian club.

Back on board...Igor Mitreski

Velice Sumulikoski, Dragan Dimitrovski and Igor Mitreski were recalled to the national team for the friendly against Ukraine at the end of March.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Sliema slip at Hibernians

Hibernians ended Sliema Wanderers' impressive start to the championship play-offs by beating the leaders and defending champions 3-0 at home. Sliema had won their first three games.

Bulgarian coach Guentcho Dobrev has quit Hamrun Spartans after a 3-1 defeat by fellow strugglers Msida St Joseph left them adrift at the bottom of the relegation pool. Veteran striker Stefan Sultana, Malta's all-time top League scorer, has taken over as player-coach.

Domenico Aquilina

Rug pulled from under Kashtan

ISRAEL

HAPOEL TEL AVIV ended weeks of speculation by telling their coach of five years, Dror Kashtan, they would not be renewing his contract at the end of the season.

The decision came after Hapoel lost their third derby of the season, 1-0 at home to Maccabi Tel Aviv to leave them nine points behind leaders Maccabi Haifa.

Kashtan, regarded as Israel's best coach, turned Hapoel into a major force, securing a League and Cup double in his first season (1999-2000). Two years later he took the team to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals, knocking out Chelsea, Lokomotiv Moscow and Parma before finally being halted by Milan.

However, last year the club won no trophies, and financial difficulties led to the release of 12 players during the summer. Not surprisingly, the decimated squad have shown patchy form this term, unable to produce the results to save Kashtan's job.

Hapoel Be'er Sheva striker Alon Mizrahi equalled the all-time League scoring record held by Oded Machness when he scored his 196th goal in the 6-1 away drubbing of Bnei Yehuda in late March.

Derek Fattal

Over and out...Hapoel's patchy form has cost Kashtan his job

Top referee banned for 'blunders'

RUSSIA

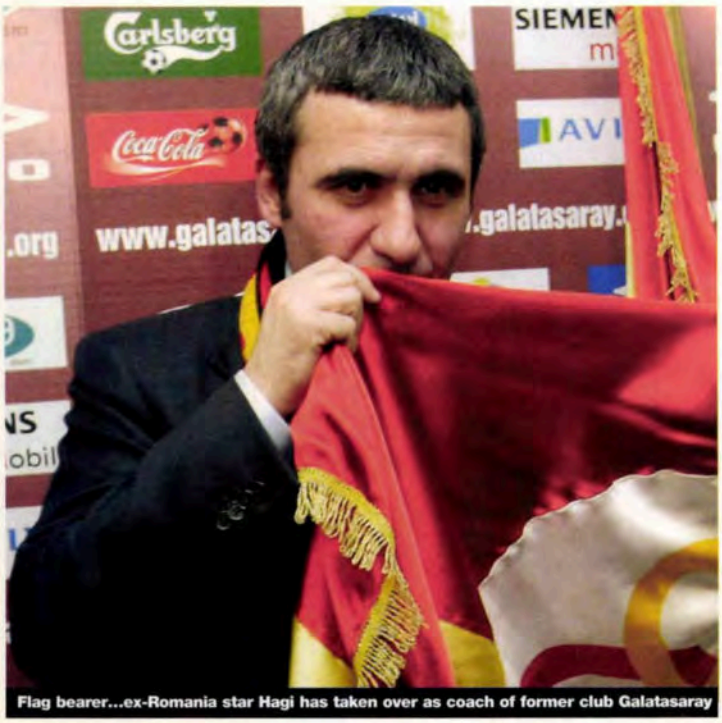
VALENTIN IVANOV, one of UEFA's choices to referee at Euro 2004, has been banned for a month for making a number of alleged blunders in the Russian Premier League. Although some of his 'mistakes' during the first two games of the season were not evident even after numerous video replays, he was still suspended by the League's experts' commission.

It is not for the first time that Ivanov, 42, has found himself under fire at home. The son of Valentin Ivanov Snr, the Soviet football legend of the 1950s and 60s, had some hard times last year, especially when he awarded a questionable penalty, which was converted, against Moscow Spartak in their derby with CSKA. The red-and-whites later claimed it took them until the end of the season to recover from the shock of losing the game. Ivanov became *persona non grata* with Spartak and has not taken charge of any of their matches since.

"Valentin has not only friends but enemies too," says Nikolai Levnikov, president of Russia's Referees Council, hinting that Ivanov has been victimised because of jealousy at his status as the country's best referee.

Victor Gusev

Whistle blown...Ivanov's friends claim some officials are jealous of his status



Flag bearer...ex-Romania star Hagi has taken over as coach of former club Galatasaray

Dan the man for Rapid

ROMANIA

DAN PETRESCU has achieved instant results as coach of Rapid Bucharest after introducing an English style of play. The former Chelsea and Romania defender, appointed during the winter break, oversaw a 2-1 win over Oradea in the first game of the spring League campaign, then saw his side come from behind in the Bucharest derby against Steaua to snatch a 3-3 draw.

Steaua were 3-1 up but buckled under the pressure of Rapid's numerous crosses to lose the chance of drawing level with leaders Dinamo Bucharest.

"My players can do much better," said Petrescu. "But changing an old-fashioned style in Romania seems to be the most difficult thing in the world."

Bacau's Ionut Lupescu, another new coach, had a mixed start. His new charges lost 2-0 away to Gloria Bistrita but then crushed Universitatea Craiova 4-1 the following week.

Gheorghe Hagi, Romania's greatest player, has revived his coaching career by taking charge of former club Galatasaray on a two-and-a-half-year contract. The former playmaker quit another Turkish club, Bursaspor, after a poor start to the current League campaign. He also failed to deliver when in charge of the Romanian national team, who missed out on the 2002 World Cup finals during his spell in charge.

Radu Timofte

UKRAINE

Second death at Arsenal

Teenage midfielder Andriy Pavytskyi became the second Arsenal Kyiv player to die this year after collapsing on the pitch during a training session. A post-mortem showed he had a congenital heart condition.

The 17-year-old B team player's death came just two months after that of top forward Shalva Apkhazava, who died from heart complications.

The tragedy prompted Arsenal B team coach Victor Ischenko to quit. He has been replaced by former Kyiv Dynamo forward Victor Khlus.

Dnipro's impressive UEFA Cup run was ended when losing 1-0 on aggregate to Marseille. However, they then gained a big victory in the League, inflicting the first defeat of the season on leaders Shakhtar Donetsk.

On the transfer front, Shakhtar have signed Dinamo Bucharest and Romania forward Ciprian Marica, experienced Latvian international Valentins Lobanovs has joined Metalurh Zaporizhzhya from Skonto Riga, Hungary defender Laszlo Bodnar is now with Arsenal Kyiv on loan from Kyiv Dynamo, and Estonian defender Taavi Rahn has been recruited by Volyn.

Meanwhile, Belarus defender Andrei Ostrovski has had his contract cancelled by Arsenal after coach Viacheslav Hrozny informed the 30-year-old he was no longer part of his plans.

Oleg Zadernovsky

BULGARIA

Lokomotiv steam on with Bonev

League leaders Lokomotiv Plovdiv have drafted in former national team coach Hristo Bonev as they continue their charge towards their first championship. The former Bulgarian international was appointed to help caretaker coach Ivan Marinov following the surprise ousting of Eduard Eranosyan in February.

A 4-1 win at Vidima-Rakovski in late March kept Lokomotiv five points clear of closest challengers Litex Lovech. Levski Sofia bounced back from their 6-2 aggregate UEFA Cup defeat by Liverpool by leapfrogging city rivals CSKA into third spot with a 4-2 win over Belasitsa.

Boris Nikolov has retaken the coaching reins at bottom side Makedonska Slava following the resignation of Yordan Bozdansky after a 3-0 defeat by local rivals Marek. Nikolov had been coach at the start of the season before taking up the technical director post. Bozdansky had replaced Yuri Vasev last October.

Michael Bowesfield

HUNGARY

Points restored to Ferencvaros

Ferencvaros went top of the League after the High Court handed them back the six points docked by the FA following crowd trouble on the last day of last season. The court reached its decision after finding fault with the legal process undertaken by the FA during the original ruling.

The six points boosted Ferencvaros' championship hopes following two disappointing goalless draws at the start of the spring campaign.

Debrecen just failed to get past Club Brugge in the UEFA Cup, losing 1-0 on aggregate. However, they remain in contention in the League, lying three points behind Ferencvaros after 19 rounds. Surprise package Balaton were a point off the top.

Vasas and Honved, two former Budapest giants now playing in the Second Division, both made it through to the Cup semi-finals.

Slavia Prague's 21-year-old midfielder Gyorgy Jozsi was the surprise inclusion in the Hungary squad to play Wales in their late March friendly.

Peterjon Cresswell

CZECH REPUBLIC

Bicik's big break

Sparta third-choice goalkeeper David Bicik was the unlikely hero of the March Prague derby, putting in an assured performance as a substitute on his First Division debut to help his side to a 2-0 away victory over Slavia. The 22-year-old was called into action after Petr Kouba, himself a stand-in for the injured Jaromir Blazek, was sent off for handling outside his area just before half-time.

The derby win has given under-fire Sparta coach Jiri Kotrba some respite, though a subsequent 0-0 draw with Slovan Liberec at home showed he has far from ironed out all the problems.

Slavia shrugged off their feeble performance against Sparta by beating leaders Banik Ostrava 2-0 away to go second, one point ahead of their Prague rivals and six off top spot.

Sam Beckwith

SLOVAKIA

Leaders suffer goal drought

Banska Bystrica managed to hold on to top spot in the League despite scoring only twice in four games at the snow-affected start of the spring campaign. The leaders' goalscoring problem allowed Spartak Trnava and Ruzomberok, both unfancied at the start of the season, to close the gap.

Stefan Zatko's position as Puchov coach is under threat as last year's Cup winners hovered just one point above last place and relegation.

Ed Holt

AZERBAIJAN

Debut drubbing for Carlos Alberto

Carlos Alberto Torres' reign as national coach got off to a terrible start as his side were thrashed 6-0 in Israel in a February friendly. The 59-year-old Brazilian, who skippered his country to World Cup triumph in 1970, was handed the reins on a one-year contract having previously coached in Egypt, Oman, Nigeria and Brazil.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

In striking form...Maciej Zurawski

FA: Bigger is better

POLAND

FA CHAIRMAN Michal Listkiewicz has instigated a re-expansion of the top division just a year after it was reduced to 14 teams from 16. The contraction was agreed "to raise the level of the competition". Now, however, Listkiewicz wants to revert to 16, starting from the 2005-06 season, "because the players need more games to be in form".

His pronouncement came at the end of Poland's 110-day winter break, one of the longest of any European league.

Defending champions and leaders Wisla Krakow beat lowly Gornik Polkowice at home and Swit Nowy Dwor away, both 2-1, in the first two games after the lay-off. But they were far from impressive and had Maciej Zurawski to thank for grabbing three of the goals.

After 15 rounds, Wisla were three points clear of Amica Wronki, with Legia Warsaw a point further back in third. Fourth-placed Groclin Grodzisk made a strong start to the spring programme, demolishing Katowice 6-0 at home and beating Odra Wodzislaw 2-0 away.

These came after a 5-1 aggregate defeat by Bordeaux in the UEFA Cup third round for which chairman and owner Zbigniew Drzymala apologised to the fans. He gave free admission to three home League games to the 200 who had made the 2,000km bus journey to France.

Bottom club Swit, who hired former national coach Wladyslaw Stachurski during the break, were still winless after 15 games.

Nurnberg midfielder Jacek Krzynowek was named Polish Player of the Year for 2003 by his fellow professionals, who also voted Wisla's Henryk Kasperczak best coach and Groclin midfielder Sebastian Mila best newcomer.

Dariusz Kurowski

Quick on the draw

COPA AMERICA

Are we doing this right?...Alonso, Dunga and Cubillas look a little bemused at the Copa America draw

NORBERTO ALONSO, from Argentina's 1978 World Cup team, former Brazil captain Dunga, and Teofilo Cubillas, who shone for Peru at two World Cups in the 1970s, were invited to do the honours at the Copa America draw in Lima. But when the illustrious trio walked on to the stage, they found the traditional glass pots conspicuously short of white balls. In fact, the South American Football Confederation (CSF) had done most of their work for them by handpicking half the draw behind closed doors in Asuncion months earlier.

Six of the 12 competing teams – the 10 South American countries, plus 'guests' Mexico and Costa Rica – had been allocated their groups and venues without a single ball being selected. The CSF decided it would be best if hosts Peru headed Group A in the capital, world champions Brazil travelled to Arequipa in the Andes for Group B, and Argentina went up north to Chiclayo, a popular surfing venue on the Pacific, for Group C.

The same meeting also placed Ecuador in the Chiclayo group, because it is near their border with Peru; Chile in Arequipa with Brazil, and Bolivia in Lima with Peru for the same reason. The general suspicion about the latter decision, however, was that the hosts had requested to play their neighbours, considering them the weakest team in the competition. After all, the Bolivian border is 1,200km from the Peruvian capital.

The wheeling and dealing meant Cubillas and co would determine only the fate of Colombia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela, Mexico and Costa Rica. Even then, CSF general secretary Eduardo Deluca made a bungling hash of the ceremony as a several-thousand strong audience of local and visiting dignitaries – including Peruvian state president Alejandro Toledo – watched in bewilderment. At one stage, Deluca was handed the name of a team, read it out, paused, said it was a mistake and sent it back into the pot from where it came.

The draw was made to look even more amateurish because local organisers had put on such an excellent prelude. The event, held in a small amphitheatre in a central Lima park, began with a show of Afro-Peruvian music and ball-juggling, and was followed by a tribute to Peruvian football figures of the past, including the Alianza Lima team that perished in a plane crash in 1988.

The organisers had other reasons to feel aggrieved with the CSF. One day before the draw, the confederation redrew their suggested schedule, which had been intended to distribute matches around the seven proposed venues. Under pressure from Traffic, who control television rights, the CSF insisted the first round would be played in 'double bills' – in other words, two games in the same group would take place in the same stadium on the same evening. The Peruvians had wanted the conventional system of one match a night per stadium, saying this would allow them to sell more tickets and hand out games more evenly.

Clearly, it is logistically unviable to sell tickets for just half of a double bill, and Arturo Woodman, president of the local organising committee, calculated that the CSF system had left them with 200,000 fewer tickets to sell and a potential £600,000 lost in revenue.

"These cities have invested a lot of money to improve their facilities," said Woodman. "The Copa America is the only competition of its kind in the world that has this double-bill system. The CSF is very conservative and refuses to make the changes that the sport needs. That's why South American football is not evolving. I think Traffic would be happiest if the Copa were decided in one single game. It would make life easier for them."

As so often happens, the draw was kind to the hosts, with Venezuela and Colombia joining them and Bolivia, while Paraguay and Costa Rica were paired with Brazil and Chile. Group C is likely to be the toughest with Uruguay and Mexico completing the line-up alongside Argentina and Ecuador. At least, it will be the toughest if Mexico bring their first team. But there is talk they could come with their Under-23 side with a view to using the contest as a warm-up for the Olympics.

Brazil had contemplated doing likewise until they amazingly failed to qualify for Athens. Now, coach Carlos Alberto Parreira wants to use the tournament to test new players. However, Brazilian federation president Ricardo Teixeira wants Brazil to win at all costs and is expecting the world champions to bring the full entourage, Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos et al.

Although it may be inconceivable for a country to send its reserves to Euro 2004, the practice has become common at the Copa America. The competition has lost much of its value since the continent expanded its World Cup qualifying into a single group, effectively turning it into a genuine South American championship.

The good news about the Peru finals is that work is well under way on the stadiums and there should be no repeat of the 2001 farce, when the CSF hummed and harred over whether host nation Colombia was safe. The competition eventually went ahead at five days' notice, having earlier been postponed, a decision that prompted Argentina to pull out.

There has already been one hiccup, though, with Ecuador threatening a boycott over an apparent hotel mix-up. They claimed their reservations in Chiclayo were cancelled in favour of Argentina, even though they booked first. "If the hotel doesn't respect our reservation then, logically, we wouldn't have anywhere to stay, so we wouldn't go," said Ecuador federation president Luis Chiriboga.

Brian Homewood

Staying put...family man Tevez has rejected Bayern Munich

Talleres go top to avoid drop

ARGENTINA

TALLERES CORDOBA, in financial trouble, on the back of two poor seasons and with a team bereft of stars, defied the odds by taking a five-point lead in the closing championship after six rounds.

The club came into the campaign facing a battle against the drop, since relegation is determined by average points gained over the past three years. And despite their League lead, survival is still the main aim of coach Juan Jose Lopez. But, for now at least, unfancied Talleres are enjoying their time at the top.

The team clearly know their limitations, relying on keeping possession and working together, rather than flair, to get results. The one key addition is ex-Boca Juniors midfielder Mauricio Serna, who is enjoying a new lease of life. Yet there certainly isn't much financial incentive behind the improved performances – their payment has been so patchy the squad recently threatened to boycott training.

Boca were second with a game in hand and the only Argentinian side doing well in both League and Libertadores Cup. Star striker Carlos Tevez, meanwhile, has poured cold water on a possible move to Bayern Munich, saying: "If I took my family to Europe, they would die."

River Plate, finding it hard to perform well twice a week, lost two consecutive League games. Their energetic style tends to leave them wide open in defence, and as midfielder Eduardo Coudet put it: "That's OK, but when you fail to take eight good chances [as in their 2-1 defeat by Quilmes], it is no wonder they beat you in the end."

Off the pitch, the domestic game has been getting a bad press. Two top division players failed drug tests on the first day of the closing campaign – San Lorenzo's Carlos Cordone for the second time in a year. Meanwhile, during the judicial investigation into hooliganism, a Boca official admitted there are turnstiles at La Bombonera through which hooligan fans are allowed to pass without tickets and with the full compliance of police.

Eric Weil

Jaguares roar

MEXICO

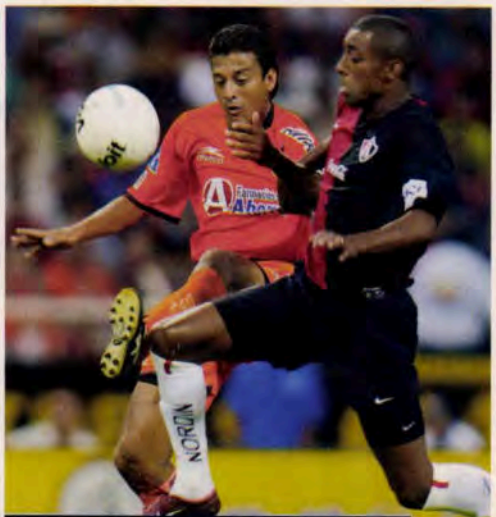
CHIAPAS STATE LIES right in the south of Mexico, a hilly region of forests and jaguars. Now the team bearing the name of the local big cats are roaring at the top of the League after two years of lacklustre performances since winning promotion.

Backed by sell-out crowds of 25,000 in their new stadium in state capital Tuxtla Gutierrez, Jaguares won nine of their first 11 closing championship games to go 14 points clear of Morelia in Group 2. Much of the credit for the sudden leap into the limelight must go to coach Jose Luis Trejo, who led Cruz Azul to the Libertadores Cup Final in 2001.

Jaguares were one of the clubs to beat Cruz Azul during a disastrous six-game losing run that culminated in the replacement of coach Enrique Meza by Luis Fernando Tena. The new man's more attacking style got immediate returns with a 2-0 home win over Gallos Blancos and a 1-1 draw at Tigres.

National coach Ricardo Lavolpe, boosted by the Under-23 side's qualification for the Athens Olympics, was brought back down to earth when the seniors produced another indifferent performance in a friendly against Ecuador. Mexico won 2-1, but the lack of firepower was again evident. The one bright spot was Omar Bravo, who followed up his goal in the previous friendly – a 1-1 draw with Chile – by scoring the winner.

Carlos Ramirez



Pouncing...Jaguares (orange strip) take on Atlas

ROUND-UP

● URUGUAY: The player strike, which led to the new season being delayed, has been resolved after agreement over minimum salaries. Players over 21 will be paid at least £170 a month, rising to £230 by 2006. Under-21s will receive at least half the normal minimum rate.

● ECUADOR: The country's recent passion for Argentinian coaches and players has suddenly cooled. While five of the 10 top-flight clubs kicked off the opening championship with Argentinian bosses, Barcelona, Emelec and Olmedo have already parted company with Ruben Insua, Otto Craviotto and Roque Alfaro respectively. Several compatriot players have also been fired for poor performances – notably Barcelona's Guillermo Moriggi and Roberto Trotta.

Defending champions LDU Quito topped the table after eight rounds, a point clear of Aucas. The latter made the most eyecatching close-season buys, bringing in former Colombia keeper Rene Higuita and Ecuador striker Agustin Delgado.

● COLOMBIA: Coldeportes, the government's sports department, has threatened to withdraw recognition of the FA and its clubs because of unpaid debts. Such an act would force the suspension of domestic and international games.

● PARAGUAY: Olimpia's Uruguayan coach Luis Cubilla resigned after a 4-1 League drubbing by champions Libertad.

Eric Weil

According to plan

This year's national championship has better organisation and credibility, writes Brian Homewood

BRAZIL

ON DECEMBER 19 last year, the following headline blared from the Brazilian federation's official website: "CBF announces the Serie A fixture list four months in advance."

The CBF had every right to brag. This was indeed a groundbreaking moment for Brazilian football. Brazil may have won five World Cups but producing a fixture list and organising competitions in advance have often seemed distant dreams.

Until 2002, the country did not even have a proper national championship. Instead, the tournament was squeezed into a five-month period in the second half of the year – the rest of the season being devoted to the appalling state championships – and used often incomprehensible formats that were chopped and changed every year. Relegation, meanwhile, was something that only ever happened to small clubs. But those days have been consigned to the past. Last year, the CBF made a huge breakthrough by holding the championship over nine months and, for the first time, using the conventional league format.

Despite some whingeing from certain quarters, namely television, that Brazilian football needs a 'Final', the CBF has stuck to its guns and kept the format this year – making it the first time the Brazilian championship has used the same format two years in a row.

It is not the only good news. Also, four teams will be relegated instead of two this season, meaning that the 2005 competition will be reduced to a more manageable 22 clubs instead of 24.

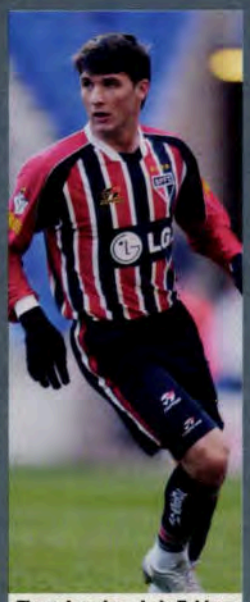
Better still, Botafogo and Palmeiras have given the championship a huge injection of credibility by playing their way out of the Second Division. Both clubs are traditional powers in Brazilian football and when they went down in 2002, there was inevitable talk of a rule change to allow them to be reinstated. Fortunately, that did not happen and, after rebuilding their teams, they both bounced back at the first attempt through their efforts on the pitch.

There are a few flies in the federation's ointment, however. The biggest and ugliest is the decision to raise ticket prices to a minimum £3. The clubs have even inserted a clause into the rules warning of dire consequences for anyone offering discounts, an astonishingly blinkered policy considering last year's average attendance was a paltry 10,342.

The CBF also took a step backwards by cutting a month off the competition to allow more time for the state championships, which are now nothing more than a boring prelude to the season. This means that 46 rounds of matches will have to be crammed into eight months, forcing full programmes to be played on weekends before World Cup qualifiers and meaning the championship will plough on during the Copa America in July.

Finally, nothing has been done to prevent a repeat of last year when nearly all the teams were decimated during the competition as European clubs snapped up the best players. The only realistic solution to this would be to stage the contest from August to June, with a summer break in December and January, so that the European close season no longer coincides with the Brazilian championship's halfway mark.

Back with the big boys...Botafogo (stripes) have worked their way into the top flight again to face the likes of Vasco da Gama


Flawed genius...Luis Fabiano

THE FAVOURITES

CRUZEIRO

The club shot themselves in the foot by firing coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo less than three months after he led them to their first national championship. Worse was to come when Rivaldo walked out in solidarity after playing only a few games. This was after Cruzeiro had offloaded Colombian striker Victor Hugo Aristizabal and veteran midfielder Zinho to make way for him. New signings include forward Guilherme, who has a reasonable scoring record, dreadful disciplinary history and reputation for being unable to get on with team-mates. There has also been trouble off the field with a police probe into the financial dealings of president Alvimar Perrella and brother Zeze, who is vice-president of football. The good news is the rest of the team are still there, including No 10 Alex.

SAO PAULO

Last year's third-place finish was not good enough for coach Ricardo Rojas to keep his job. In his place, the country's most underachieving team have brought in Cuca, who led Goias from bottom to ninth last term. He brought with him striker Grafite, who led the charge up the table. Sao Paulo's attack continues to be led by Brazil's latest flawed genius, striker Luis Fabiano – with explosive pace, clinical finishing and a shocking temper that earned him four red cards last term. The other key figure is keeper, captain and free-kick specialist Rogerio Ceni.

SAO CAETANO

They have come from nowhere to establish themselves in the top flight despite a tiny following. Twice national championship runners-up in the past four years and beaten Libertadores Cup finalists in 2002, yet they had the worst average attendance in Serie A last year at 2,367. The *Azulao* have bought experienced players such as ex-Vasco da Gama and Gremio midfielder Gilberto, free-kick specialist full-back Anderson Luis and speedy striker Euller. Once again they seem capable of launching a title tilt, even if nobody cares.

SANTOS

Despite endless rumours about multi-million pound transfers for Robinho and Diego, the club have managed to hold on to the golden duo for the time being. Whether the pair can live up to their early promise is another matter. Both were in the Brazil side that astonishingly failed to qualify for the Athens Olympics, and media photographs of Robinho pulling down Diego's shorts when the team went to pick up their credentials hardly boosted their reputation. Recent signs, however, are that Robinho is getting his game together again, though Diego is still being substituted regularly. The core of the side that won the title in 2002 and were runners-up in both national championship and Libertadores Cup last year remains intact, and coach Emerson Leao still rants away on the touchline.

THE OTHERS

Once again, none of the four Rio teams will start among the favourites and have signed so many ageing players that the Carioca state championship was dubbed 'the under-40s'. **FLAMENGO**, who last year changed coach three times and were hit by reports of players faking injury, have appointed former World Cup defender Junior as technical director to try to sort things out. They also hauled volatile 1998 World Cup defender Junior Baiano out of retirement and brought 36-year-old midfielder Zinho back to the club where he began his career.

VASCO DA GAMA and **FLUMINENSE** are both gambling on well-known troublemakers. The former repatriated free-kick specialist Marcelinho Carioca, best known for crediting everything in his career to Jesus Christ – apart from his numerous red cards. Vasco also signed former Hertha Berlin striker Alex Alves, complete with his dyed hair, karate kicks and atrocious disciplinary record.

Fluminense, who already have 38-year-old "I play better after a good night on the town" Romario to deal with, have become the latest to try to tame 'The Animal', Edmundo. But coach Valdir Espinosa has already had enough, walking out during the state championship. His replacement is former Paris Saint-Germain defender Ricardo Gomes, who was in charge during Brazil's failed Olympic qualifying bid. He quickly tried to impose some order, taking the unheard-of step of trying to make Romario turn up for training.

Promoted **BOTAFOGO**, with former Benfica midfielder Valdo still in fine fettle at 40, could be Rio's best bet.

Sao Paulo's **CORINTHIANS** incredibly failed to make the semi-finals of the Paulista championship, despite signing 13 players in the close season, and were pelted with eggs by their own fans at Sao Paulo airport as they left for a match. The decision to fire coach Juninho Fonseca and bring back Oswaldo de Oliveira for a third stint did nothing to improve the situation.

In contrast, arch-rivals **PALMEIRAS** have won back fans by playing their way out of the Second Division. Teenage striker Vagner Silva – better known as Vagner Love – could be among the revelations. Palmeiras have stayed faithful to the man who steered them back to the top flight, Jair Picerni.

As last year showed, there is far more to the championship than the Rio-Sao Paulo mainstream. The title win of Belo Horizonte's Cruzeiro meant an extra dose of suffering for local rivals **ATLETICO MINEIRO**. In an attempt to emerge from Cruzeiro's shadows, Atletico have appointed Paulo Bonamigo, who led unrated Coritiba to fifth place – and the Libertadores Cup – last year.

GREMIO, from Porto Alegre, have had a clear-out after the twice former champions only narrowly avoided relegation last year. Departures included keeper Danrlei and captain Roger, both in the team since the 1990s, when the club won the Libertadores Cup.

City rivals **INTERNACIONAL** have lost key midfielders in Under-20 international Daniel Carvalho, to CSKA Moscow, and Paraguayan Diego Gavilan, to Italy's Udinese.

Salvador-based **VITORIA** are the lone representatives from the north-east after Bahia and Fortaleza went down. Vitoria's key pair, Ze Roberto and Dudu Cearense, have both departed, and although replacements Edilson and Vampeta were both in Brazil's 2002 World Cup squad, both made more headlines last year for antics off the pitch.

Debagged...Diego and Robinho's prank damaged their reputation

We're Africa's No 1...Enyimba hoist the Super Cup after their victory over Etoile Sahel

Enyimba supreme

AFRICAN SUPER CUP

NIGERIA'S Enyimba confirmed their status as the continent's top club side after beating Etoile Sahel of Tunisia 1-0 in the African Super Cup, played in the winners' home town of Aba.

It was the first time a Nigerian side had won the trophy, contested by the holders of the Champions League (Enyimba) and the Cup-winners Cup (Etoile).

Bob Osim scored the goal in the 21st minute, and Enyimba held out despite having Obinna Nwaneri sent off late in the game.

It was the first match in charge for both coaches – Enyimba's Michael Urokalo and Frenchman Bernard Simondi at Etoile Sahel, while the Tunisians gave a debut to winger Imad Mhadhebi, a member of his country's Nations Cup-winning squad.

Money raised at the game has been pledged by the Confederation of African Football to the family of Marc-Vivien Foe, the Cameroon midfielder who died at last year's Confederations Cup in France.

● Egyptian club Ismaili and Tunisian champions Esperance have been banned from playing continental competition matches at their home stadiums for seven and five matches respectively because of crowd violence. They were both also ordered to stage games more than 200km away and pay £10,000 fines following incidents in last year's African Champions League.

The handover of the Champions League trophy to Enyimba was held up for 25 minutes and fans attacked police outside the ground after the second leg of the Final in Ismailia in December. Ismaili lost 2-1 on aggregate to the Nigerian champions after a tempestuous second leg.

Esperance were punished for incidents in November's second leg of their semi-final against Ismaili, who won 3-1 in Tunis and 6-2 on aggregate. Supporters threw missiles from the stands on to the pitch and Ismaili and CAF officials were abused by the Tunisian club.

Mark Gleeson

No go, Adigo

BENIN

FOR COLLECTORS of trivia, one of the big disappointments of the African Nations Cup finals was the failure of Benin to play Germany-based defender Dinalo Adigo in any of their three matches.

Adigo, a full-time church pastor with a part-time football career in the amateur leagues of Germany, came out of nowhere to be selected by Benin for the tournament. The 31-year-old had played for his country before, but not since 1991. Had he appeared in the finals, he may have set a world record for length of time between international appearances.

Benin, in a bit of a panic before the start of the Tunisia finals, made sweeping changes to the squad that had secured them a first-ever qualification for the African championship. Adigo was one who benefited from the decision to give preference to overseas-based players.

The defender had joined the Benin squad at a training camp in France on the eve of the tournament and got himself selected for the final 22 despite his long absence from the international scene. But he did not appear in Tunisia, quite simply because, according to Benin federation vice-president Anjorin Moucharafou, he was not good enough.

"We made a mistake in selecting him. We remembered him from the old days and thought because he had been playing in Europe so long he might be able to help us," said Moucharafou candidly. "But the more we looked at him, the more we realised he just wasn't good enough for the standard of the Nations Cup."

After appearing in a Nations Cup qualifier against Ghana in Cotonou on July 28, 1991, the then 19-year-old Adigo left Benin to try his luck in Europe. He first played in Belgium at Westerlo, then later in Germany for the likes of Kickers Offenbach, FSV Lok/Atlmark Stendal and SSV Reutlingen, rarely returning home and never to play football for his country.

His current club is FC Schoenberg 95, where he also works with the youth teams.

Mark Gleeson

Schafer agrees to Yaounde move

CAMEROON

NATIONAL COACH Winfried Schafer has finally agreed to take up residency in Cameroon, more than two years after first taking the job.

The German has finally bowed to government pressure that he live in the capital, Yaounde, so he can better monitor emerging talent in the domestic League. Pressure intensified after the Indomitable Lions failed to retain their African Nations Cup title in Tunisia.

Schafer had previously refused to move, saying it was better for him to stay in his native country because all the key Cameroon players were with European clubs.

The coach has now been presented with a smart villa in the chic Bastos quarter of Yaounde and has a government car and driver at his disposal.

Schafer, who has little command of English and French (the two official languages of Cameroon), took over as coach in October 2001 and four months later helped the country win the African Nations Cup title in Mali.

On the selection front, the German has promised to think over a possible return to the Indomitable Lions line-up of Arsenal defender Lauren.

● Cameroon, gold medallists at the Sydney Olympics, will not be in Athens to defend their title after being held 1-1 by DR Congo in the penultimate qualifier, then being pipped to the group top spot by Mali after losing 1-0 to them.

Tunisia's Under-23s followed up the senior team's Nations Cup success by topping Group A. The other African qualifiers are Morocco and Ghana, now under the charge of Portuguese coach Mariano Barretto.

Ivory Coast's failure to reach the Games signalled the end for veteran coach Robert Nouzaret. The Frenchman, in his second spell, had endured media criticism after a string of indifferent results.

Mark Gleeson

Home comforts...Schafer will monitor emerging local talent

ROUND-UP

CENTRAL AFRICA

● Nabi Nasreddine, originally from Tunisia but a Belgian citizen, is the new coach of top DR CONGO side Daring Club Motema Pembe.

EAST AFRICA

● REUNION club Stade Tamponnaise withdrew from this year's African Champions League because of concerns over costs. They now face a two-year continental competition ban.

● In the SEYCHELLES, St Louis beat St Michel United 2-1 to win the President's Cup.

NORTH AFRICA

● Ex-ALGERIA coach Abdelhamid Kermali has been fired by Entente Setif. Abdelkrim Khalfa returns for a second spell at the club.

● Youssef Zouaoui has become the third coach this season at TUNISIA'S Club Africain.

● MOROCCO'S Raja Casablanca have named Acacio Casimiro as coach in place of Henri Michel.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

● SOUTH AFRICAN international Jabu Pule has been suspended by Kaizer Chiefs after missing a key Cup match. A two-year drugs ban imposed on former South African winger Arthur Zwane has been reduced to six months on appeal.

● Max Johnson is the new coach of NAMIBIA, replacing veteran German Peter Uberjahn, who resigned last year.

● Champions AS Aviacao won ANGOLA'S Super Cup, beating Cup winners InterClube 6-1 on aggregate.

● Egyptian Ayman Mohamed has been appointed MOZAMBIQUE coach after Arnaldo Salvado refused to sign a new deal.

WEST AFRICA

● Henri Michel is the new coach of IVORY COAST, the fourth African national side he has led in the past decade. The former France boss, recently in charge of Raja Casablanca, takes over from compatriot Robert Nouzaret.

● GHANAIAN champions Asante Kotoko have appointed German Hans Kodric as coach. He replaces Abdul Razak, sacked despite leading the club to their first League title in 10 years. Arch-rivals Hearts of Oak have also hired a German, Ernst Middendorp. Ironically, he previously worked at Asante Kotoko.

Mark Gleeson

FIFA blocks 'sales' of nationality

FIFA HAS PUT an end to Qatar's plans to naturalise three Brazilians with no links with the Gulf state beyond the lure of the money on offer.

Werder Bremen's Ailton and Borussia Dortmund duo Leandro and Dede had been on the verge of switching nationality to the oil-rich state, with Ailton having agreed a reported fee of £700,000, before FIFA intervened.

"Naturalisation that allows players with no obvious connection to the new country to play for that country's national teams is not the aim and object of our Statutes," said president Sepp Blatter. "We have to put an immediate stop to such practices."

FIFA's action came after German federation president Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder raised the issue, vowing to block the Brazilians' plans. Needless to say, Ailton was less than impressed, saying: "I feel like leaving Germany, I'm really that angry."

Meanwhile, Majed Al-Khalifi, the Qatari federation's assistant general secretary, said: "It goes against FIFA's previous decision in October last year, which allowed national federations to naturalise any player who has not played for his country of birth."

Manfred Hohner, Qatar's technical director, put his own interpretation on why the plan failed, saying: "The problem was that this incident was well covered by the media then suddenly FIFA got involved."

Michael Church

No reason to smile...Leandro and Dede can't play for Qatar, says FIFA

That's better...Fukunishi equalises in the Super Cup

Jubilo off to a flier

JAPAN

JUBILO IWATA made a flying start to the new campaign, with victories in the Asian Champions League, Japanese Super Cup and the first two J.League matches. It was a boost for manager Takashi Kuwahara, back in charge having left the helm in 1999.

Jubilo beat Yokohama F Marinos on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the Super Cup. Japan midfielder Takashi Fukunishi was Jubilo's hero and villain, first giving away the penalty that allowed Marinos to go in front, making amends by scoring himself with five minutes left, and then missing his kick in the shoot-out. That did not prove costly, however, as Jubilo ran out 4-2 winners.

The club topped the J.League First Stage after two rounds, on goal difference from Kashiwa Reysol, and were also in pole position in their Champions League group.

Japan became the first Asian team to qualify for the Athens Olympics, though they struggled through their group, which also contained Bahrain, UAE and Lebanon.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

ROUND-UP

ASIA

- Brazilian Paulo Carpeggiani has been sacked as KUWAIT coach after the Under-23 team lost to Oman in the final round of Olympic qualifiers. The senior side has also struggled under Carpeggiani, finishing sixth out of seven in the Gulf Cup in January and losing to China in their opening World Cup qualifier.

- Albirex Niigata S, the satellite club of J.League side Albirex Niigata, led the way at the top of the SINGAPORE League after four games. Young Chinese defender Jiang Tao was killed after being struck by lightning during a training session with his Singapore club, Sinchi FC.

- Brazilian Edson Tavares has taken charge of VIETNAM for a second time, signing a one-year contract. Tavares coached Chinese club Chongqing Lifan last season.

- Former SOUTH KOREAN champions Anyang Cheetahs have relocated to the capital and taken on the name FC Seoul. Masakiyo Maezono, one-time golden boy of Japanese football, has joined Korean League newcomers Incheon United.

- Brothers Union clinched the BANGLADESH title for the first time with a 1-0 win over Mukijoddha KC.

- Munal FC of NEPAL lifted the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Memorial Gold Cup trophy in Bhutan, defeating local side Thimphu-XI 3-0 in the Final.

- Esteghlal went top of the IRANIAN League in the 22nd round after beating Fajr-e Sepassi 3-2. Previous leaders Pas were held to a 1-1 draw by Abu Moslem.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

OCEANIA

- Parramatta Power reached their first AUSTRALIAN Grand Final after defeating defending champions Perth Glory 6-2 on aggregate in the play-off semi-finals. In the process, they ended Glory's 13-month unbeaten run.

- TAHITI'S Tefana claimed their first major trophy when defeating champions Pirae on penalties in the Cup Final after a 1-1 draw.

- Globetrotting Englishman Alan Gillet is the new SOLOMON ISLANDS coach.

Paul Moon

TALENT SCOUT

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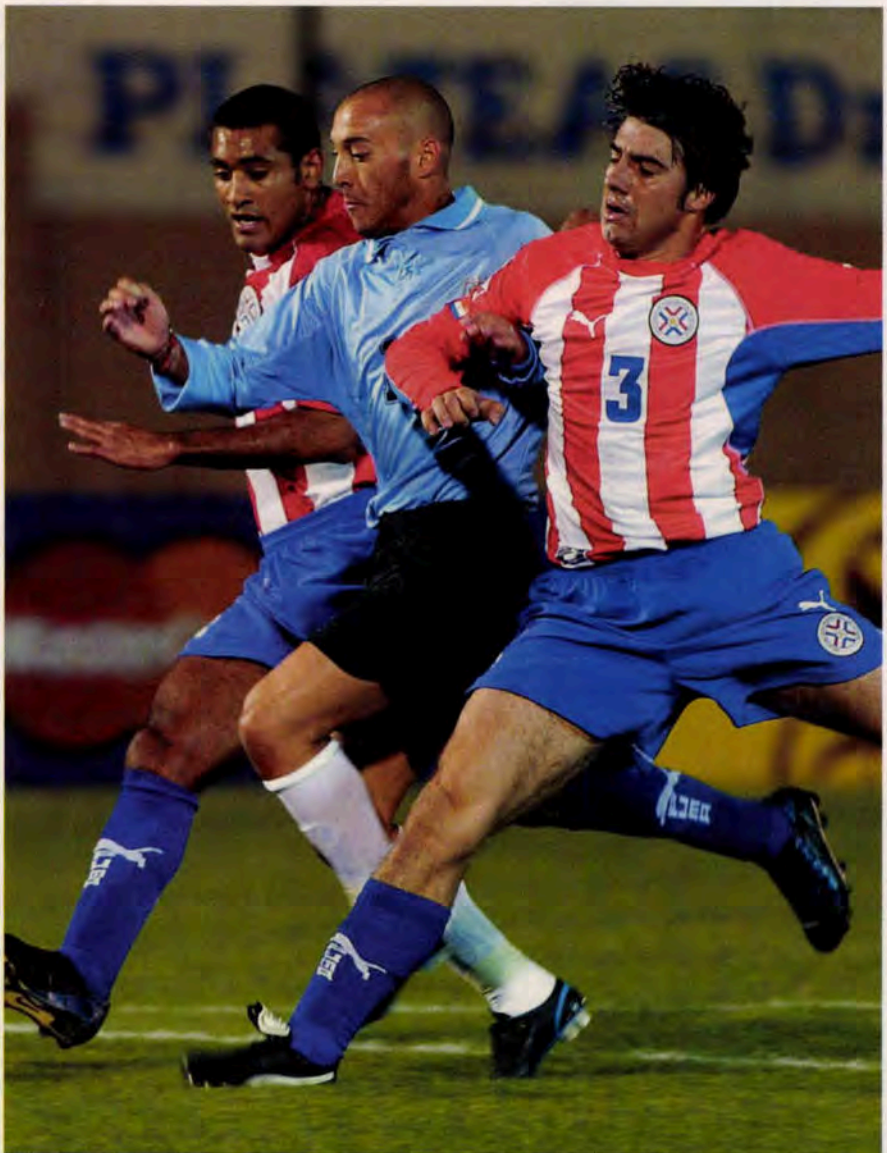
Ernesto Javier CHEVANTON



Coming through...Chevanton muscles past two Paraguay defenders during a World Cup qualifier

Uruguayan kicking up a storm in Serie A

THE CHEQUEBOOKS WILL be out, and next season Ernesto Javier Chevanton will surely be in the line-up of one of the giants of Serie A.

The livewire Uruguayan striker's form for Lecce has forced him on to the shopping lists of the rich and powerful – and it is not the first time he has proved his worth with a small club.

In his first year as a professional, Chevanton was close to breaking Uruguay's all-time scoring record, despite playing for Danubio, a club with just a single title to show for their 72 years.

It was, however, a perfect place to start. "Everyone speaks well of the work Danubio do at youth level," says Chevanton. Developing young players is a proud club tradition – which he became part of almost by chance.

The striker grew up in the countryside, and only went to Montevideo after his father lost his job in a textile factory and moved to the capital in search of work. The son was disorientated in the big city, but he knew how to play football. Danubio's base was close to his new home, so he presented himself at the club – and three years later was in Uruguay's Under-15 squad and set for a professional career.

Romario and Jurgen Klinsmann were Chevanton's teenage idols. He may not quite possess the strength of the latter or the former's touch of genius – but he has enough of both to make him a highly accomplished striker. With his speed off the mark and positional sense he is always a threat in the penalty area, while his waspish bursts of acceleration can also do damage down the flanks. And his superb, swerving long-range free-kicks are better than anything his idols could do.

Uruguay are now getting maximum value from his all-round game. Chevanton missed out on the 2002 World Cup, the victim of a poor display in the play-off away to Australia and the rise of his strike partner from the 1999 World Youth Cup, Manchester United's Diego Forlan.

Now there is room for both, thanks to new coach Juan Ramon Carrasco and his bold selection of three strikers.

It entails a positional adjustment. "I play more on the right side," says Chevanton, "rather than in the central role I'm used to." But there are plenty of opportunities to get into the penalty area, and the attacking balance of the team is a striker's dream. It is no wonder, then, that Chevanton declares himself "very happy with what the national team are doing. I love the feeling that the coach has confidence in me, and I'm trying to take full advantage."

With the goals flowing in Serie A and in World Cup qualification, Chevanton senses that the time has finally come to leave small clubs behind. "I'm very happy at Lecce and I'm enjoying a fantastic year," he says. "But I can't deny that I would like to move to one of the major Italian clubs. I think I'm up to it, and I hope it works out for me as soon as possible."

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

- **Club** Lecce (Ita)
- **Country** Uruguay
- **Born** August 12, 1980, in Juan Lacaze
- **Previous club** Danubio
- **International debut** July 2001, v Bolivia
- **International caps** 12 (6 goals)

Gael CLICHY

The latest French find for Wenger

STRANGE AS IT may sound, southern French club Cannes have played quite a part in Arsenal's development into a European force. Both Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger and his assistant, Boro Primorac, once worked at the Cote d'Azur club, midfield ace Patrick Vieira began his career there, and now it is the turn of another ex-*Cannois*, young left-back or midfielder Gael Clichy, to make an impact at Highbury.

Not for nothing does Wenger have a reputation for discovering footballing works of art among flea market junk, for detecting talent barely evident to others. An 18-year-old playing in the French Third Division would not be an obvious transfer target for a club of Arsenal's stature but, as usual, Wenger was ahead of the game, inviting Clichy for a trial, watching him impress in a number of pre-season games and then signing him for a reported £250,000.

Such a fee already seems a steal. Whether replacing Ashley Cole at left-back or providing cover on the left side of midfield, he has very much looked the part, an exciting package of athleticism, speed and technical ability.

It is hard to believe that this is a youngster who made his professional debut for Cannes only in August 2002. Clearly not one to be unnerved by thoughts of facing much more experienced opponents in the Premiership or Champions League, the teenager has come through every test with flying colours. His positional play is extremely good for someone so young, he tackles cleanly and aggressively, and runs well with the ball too.

Perhaps there is something in the Mediterranean water that laps Cannes. Over the past dozen years, their youth system has put the likes of Vieira, Zinedine Zidane, Werder Bremen playmaker Johan Micoud, Roma defender Jonathan Zebina and Parma keeper Sebastien Frey on the road to stardom. Clichy is shaping up to be the next big thing.

"We are very proud that Gael has settled in well and has been doing himself justice for a team as strong as Arsenal," says Christian Lopez, director of the Cannes academy and a former Saint-Etienne and France libero who appeared at the 1978 and 1982 World Cups. "In a perfect world, we would have liked him to stay longer. But the chance to play for Arsenal was unique. He couldn't refuse. He has all the ingredients to succeed at the highest level. He has great maturity and is a good competitor. He's very fast and is not afraid of the ball."

A member of the French Under-17 side that lost to Switzerland in the Final of the European Championship in 2002, Clichy recently graduated to the Under-21s, who also include such fine prospects as Liverpool attacking cousins Anthony Le Tallec and Florent Sinama-Pongolle and midfielders Mourad Meghni of Bologna and Sochaux's Jeremy Mathieu.

"Clichy is a very interesting player indeed," says France Under-21 coach Raymond Domenech. "He's been making good progress both defensively and in his constructive play. Rubbing shoulders with all those super players at Arsenal has to be beneficial. I hear Patrick Vieira acts like his big brother. He couldn't have a better role model."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club **Arsenal (Eng)**
Country **France**
Born **July 26, 1985, in Paris**
Previous club **Cannes**

John HEITINGA

Ajax defender in the frame for Holland after injury battle

HOW FITTING THAT Ajax defender John Heitinga should have made his debut for Holland in a friendly with the United States in February. After all, the 20-year-old owes his career to American medical expertise.

Heitinga's future looked decidedly bleak when he tore cruciate ligaments in his left knee in a League game with NAC Breda in August 2002. But to the rescue came famous American orthopaedic surgeon Dr Richard Steadman, who successfully repaired the damage at his clinic in Colorado.

By the start of this season, Heitinga had recovered sufficiently to reclaim a centre-back berth with the Amsterdammers. So good was his form in both domestic competition and Champions League that Holland coach Dick Advocaat deemed the time right to select him for the USA friendly in Amsterdam.

The 99th Ajax player to appear for the *Oranje*, Heitinga was asked to deploy his tenacity, strength in the air and sound technique at right-back. He underlined his adaptability with a sure-footed display.

"This is a dream come true," said Heitinga, a product of the Ajax youth system and capped in every Holland youth category from Under-15 upwards. "I didn't want to swap my shirt at the end. I was given two for the occasion and will put one in a frame and give the other to my grandfather."

Heitinga deserves his reward for he has already endured more than his share of bad luck. Only 17 when he made his Ajax debut in a 2-1 win at Feyenoord in August 2001, he soon discovered the flipside of the coin. He underwent minor cartilage surgery in February 2002, only for complications to set in. Another operation was required and his season was over. His troubles were just beginning.

Nearly 18 months sidelined leaves its mark. Maybe that's why a fully-fit Heitinga is now on a mission that could take him all the way to Portugal.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** Ajax
- **Country** Holland
- **Born** November 15, 1983, in Alphen aan den Rijn
- **Previous club** ARC
- **International debut** February 2004, v USA
- **International caps** 1 (0 goals)
- **Honours** Dutch League 2002

Philipp LAHM

Bayern full-back making the grade on loan at Stuttgart

A SPELL ON loan at Stuttgart has proved the making of right-footed left-back Philipp Lahm. Untried in the Bundesliga before making the switch from Bayern Munich's amateurs last summer, the 20-year-old has bridged the class gap with ease, establishing himself as an automatic choice, then winning his first full cap for Germany in a friendly against Croatia in Split in February.

What an impressive debut it was. Although from the bantamweight division, he offered plenty of punch in the tackle, covered intelligently and also showed his usual taste for attack.

How times have changed for Lahm. Last year, he was playing at right-back in the German regional league; now he is Stuttgart's left-back and feeds on a diet of Bundesliga, Champions League and international football. Only those with a good attitude can make such quantum leaps.

"It's really sensational how quickly my career has taken off," says Lahm. "I certainly hadn't thought of being selected by Rudi Voller. I had only just broken into the Under-21s. The move to Stuttgart has gone far better than I could have hoped. I would have been pleased with a few starts but to be a regular in the side and play in the Champions League is fantastic."

Given Lahm's high standard over the past six months and the dearth of quality German left-backs *Nationalmannschaft* boss Voller had no choice but to use his skills. However, Under-21 coach Uli Stielike fears Lahm will have to skip the European Under-21 Championship in Germany in May and June just to play a bit-part role at Euro 2004. "It would be better for his development to play for us and in the Olympics rather than sit on the bench for the seniors," says Stielike.

More uncertain, however, is Lahm's club future. He still has another season left on his loan at Stuttgart but his Bayern contract runs to 2007. The Bavarians will certainly want him back – and who could blame them?

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** Stuttgart
- **Country** Germany
- **Born** November 11, 1983, in Munich
- **Previous clubs** FT Gern Munich, Bayern Munich
- **International debut** February 2004, v Croatia
- **International caps** 1 (0 goals)

Ismail MATAR

UAE's golden boy tipped to make it big in Europe

THE BURDEN OF walking in Diego Maradona's footsteps has proved too great to bear for many players. United Arab Emirates forward Ismail Matar is the latest to attempt to buck the trend after picking up the Golden Ball award at last year's World Youth Cup, the trophy won by Maradona in Japan in 1979.

After the Argentinian, few winners of the award – for the Youth Cup's best player – have become anything more than footnotes in football history (Robert Prosinecki being one notable exception). But Hatem Souissi, Matar's former youth team coach, is sure the Al Wahda striker can go on to make an impact in the European game. "Matar has the skill and speed to be a success," says the Tunisian, currently an assistant to Qatar coach Philippe Troussier. "He can shoot with either foot and he keeps his cool in front of goal. For me he is a modern player, he can play up front or drop deep.

"Despite all that is written about him, Matar has managed to keep his feet on the ground. He is really mature and behaves with great modesty. With all the Asian players now going to Europe, there is no reason why he cannot go and do well. He certainly has the profile to make the next move."

Matar was the first Asian player to pick up the Golden Ball as he helped guide his team to the quarter-finals, the first time the UAE have gone so far in a FIFA tournament. His performances also got him on the shortlist for the Asian Football Confederation's Young Player of the Year award, though he lost out in the end to Japan's Yoshito Okubo.

The Emirates' French coach, Jean-Francois Jodar, goes further in his assessment of the 20-year-old's talent. "It's like having Zinedine Zidane in your team," he says. "His presence and play increase the confidence level in the squad. He is just outstanding. Each time we give him the ball, he does amazing things with it."

Michael Church

FACT FILE

Club Al Wahda
Country United Arab Emirates
Born April 7, 1983
Honours World Youth Cup Golden Ball winner 2003

Nikola ZIGIC

Amsterdam calling for the 'Serbian Koller'

IF LAST YEAR someone had told Nikola Zigic that soon he would be in the Red Star Belgrade squad, he would have gratefully accepted the offer. At the time, he was playing for Spartak Subotica in the third level of the Serbia & Montenegro League.

After scoring 14 goals in 11 games, his apprenticeship was over and in summer 2003 Zigic joined Red Star. He admits feeling "last on the list", but manager Slavoljub Muslin gave him a chance, and since then Zigic has not only became a regular, but also the League's top scorer. The forward has undoubtedly made the biggest impact of the 2003-04 season.

With 16 League goals, plus six in UEFA Cup, the 23-year-old has been catapulted to stardom, and earned his first call-up to the senior national squad for the March friendly against Norway. Ajax are on his trail and have reportedly made a £6million bid.

Zigic tries to stay cool at his sudden star status. "My job is to work hard in training, to try to improve and to score goals," he says. "As long as it is like that, things will be fine. Right now, I just concentrate on my game and on winning the League with Red Star. It doesn't make sense to think about a transfer. Anyway, nobody has contacted me so far."

The 6ft 6in striker, inevitably dubbed the 'Serbian Jan Koller', may look more like a basketball player but appearances can be deceptive. Zigic, whose idol is Christian Vieri, moves very well, has a fine sense of team play and a sharp eye for goals. Naturally dominant in the air, his weakness is a lack of dribbling skills but he simply avoids it.

He says: "I want to improve, but right now I know I'm not good at it so I don't do it. After all, football is a team game. If I'm good at scoring goals, so be it. And if other players are good at dribbling or crossing, they should do it for the benefit of the team."

Vladimir Novak

FACT FILE

Club Red Star Belgrade
Country Serbia & Montenegro
Born September 25, 1980, in Backa Topola
Previous clubs Krivaja, AIK Backa Topola, Mornar Bar, Spartak Subotica

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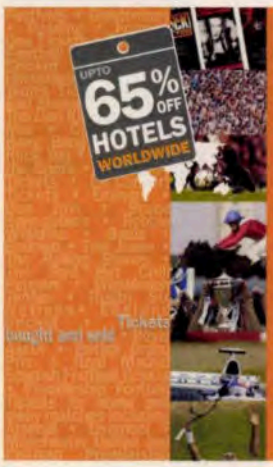

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Cheers for the vinotinto

Venezuela gained a historic win in Uruguay in the latest round of World Cup qualifiers

VENEZUELA RECORDED THEIR first ever win away to Uruguay in the latest round of South American World Cup qualifiers and in the process put themselves in the frame for progress to the finals for the first time. The *vinotinto*, the only one of the 10 South American countries never to have appeared at a World Cup and until recently the continent's whipping boys, won 3-0 in Montevideo on goals from Gabriel Urdaneta, Hector Gonzalez and Juan Arango. The result put them fourth in the table after five games, filling the last of the automatic qualification slots.

Venezuela dominated the play and could have scored even more had it not been for some fine saves by keeper Gustavo Munua.

While the visitors celebrated their third win of the 18-game campaign, Uruguay coach Juan Ramon Carrasco has begun to feel the heat. The shock defeat, and the hosts' disjointed display, led to calls for his resignation from angry fans.

Brazil are ahead of Venezuela only on goal difference after being held to a 0-0 draw away to Paraguay. The world champions' attacking trio of Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Kaka were frustrated by some stout defending by the hosts, who had gone into the game on top of the standings.

Argentina now lead the way, by a point from Paraguay, after a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Ecuador in Buenos Aires. Hernan Crespo got the goal on the hour.

Colombia recorded their first win of the campaign, beating Peru 2-0 away thanks to a Freddy Grisales volley and a Frankie Oviedo header. The result made it a winning competitive debut for coach Reinaldo Rueda, who replaced Francisco Maturana after the team picked up only one point from their first four games.

In the other South American game, Chile moved up to fifth place – and sent Bolivia bottom – after winning 2-0 in La Paz.

Maldives pulled off the shock result in the second round of Asian first stage qualifiers, holding 2002 semi-finalists South Korea to a goalless draw in Male. The Koreans' lacklustre display against a side ranked 142nd in the world has increased the pressure on coach Humberto Coelho. He was already under the cosh after a string of mediocre performances.

Despite dropping the points, South Korea went top of Group 7 after Lebanon beat previous leaders Vietnam 2-0 away.

Japan, South Korea's co-hosts in 2002, also struggled, beating Singapore 2-1 away thanks to a late Toshiya Fujita goal. Zico's side now lead Group 3 by three points after Oman beat India, who had been joint top, 5-1 in Kochin.

Iran were the biggest winners of the round, trouncing Laos 7-0 in Vientiane. They now top Group 1 on goal difference from Jordan, 1-0 winners over Qatar.

The line-up for the deciding games of CONCACAF'S first stage is now complete, after some comprehensive victories. Bermuda were the biggest winners, thrashing Montserrat 7-0 away to give them a 20-0 aggregate result. They now meet El Salvador over two legs in June to decide which of them progresses to the second stage groups.

St Kitts & Nevis beat US Virgin Islands 7-0 (11-0 on aggregate) to set up a tie with Barbados, while St Lucia thrashed the British Virgin Islands 9-0 (10-0 on aggregate) and will now meet Panama.

The June games will be the first for the region's top teams. The United States will play Grenada (8-1 aggregate winners over Guyana), while Mexico meet Dominica (4-2 winners against Bahamas).

Michael Bowesfield

Smiles all round...Venezuela's Gilberto Angelucci and Alexander Rondon celebrate their win in Montevideo

INTERNATIONALS

Sunday, February 29

Feb 29 - Maseru - COSAFA CC, 1st rnd
Lesotho 0
Botswana 0
Ref: Mufeti (Nam)
Botswana 11-10 on pens
Lesotho: Khoboli - Hlojeng, Mahlakajoe, Maseela, Seema, Pheko, Moletsane, Ramafole, Mosothoane, Mphongoa, Majara (Ntsonyana 62).
Botswana: Marumo - Letsholathebe, Motlhabane, Nyathi, Motlhabankwe (Mothusi 73), Gabanakgosi, Kgosiang, Butale (Kgopolelo 87), Gabolwelwe, Ntshingane (Molwantwa 46), Selolwane.

Feb 29 - friendly
Nicaragua 1
Haiti 1
HT: 0-0

Tuesday, March 2

Mar 2 - friendly
Trinidad & Tobago 1
Guyana 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, March 10

Mar 10 - Tuxtla Gutierrez - friendly
Mexico 2 (D Martinez pen 18, Bravo 30)
Ecuador 1 (Mendez pen 33)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Mexico: O Sanchez - Carmona (M Perez 61), Osorio, Briseno, Valdez (Mendez 61), D Martinez, Lopez, L Perez, R Garcia (F Rodriguez 61), Bautista (Santana 46), Bravo (Osorno 61).
Ecuador: Ibarra - Corozo, I Hurtado, Perlaza (Quiroz 46), R Guerron (Fernandez 46), M Ayovi (Ordonez 75), Guagua (Campos 63), Chala, Mendez, Rosero (Saritama 60), Delgado.

Mar 10 - Maracaibo - friendly
Venezuela 2 (L Vera pen 36, Noriega 52)
Honduras 1 (Lopez 39)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Manzur (Ven)
Venezuela: Angelucci (Dudamel 46) - Rouga, Vallenilla, Rivero (G Perez 46), Vizcarrondo, Rojas, Jimenez, L Vera, Arango (M Mea Vitali 79), Noriega (Garcia 63), Moreno (Moran 46).
Honduras: Escober - Nery Medina, Bernardez, Izaguirre, Morales (Costa 78), Lopez (Figueroa 75), Marin, Jose Pineda (Mena 66), W Palacios, E Martinez, Velasquez (Ramirez 46).

Friday, March 12

Mar 12 - friendly
Barbados 2
Dominica 1
HT: 1-0

Saturday, March 13

Mar 13 - Miami - friendly
United States 1 (Califf 90)
Haiti 1 (Boucicot 69)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,714. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
USA: Walker (Hartman 46) - Sanneh (Albright 46), Pope (Califf 75), Bocanegra, Gibbs, Ralston (Noonan 75), Convey, Armas (Razov 66), Beasley, Donovan (Mulrooney 74), Wolyniec (Kirovski 83).
Haiti: Gabart - Desir, Gilles, Corriolan, Peguero (Gracien), Descollines, Boucicot, Bruny, Dorcelus (Romulus 60), Santcius, Chery.

Tuesday, March 16

Mar 16 - Havana - friendly
Cuba 1
Panama 1
HT: 1-1

Wednesday, March 17

Mar 17 - friendly
China 2
Myanmar 0
HT: 2-0

Mar 17 - friendly
Malaysia 0
Indonesia 0
Att: 8,000. **Ref:** Ong (Mly)

Thursday, March 18

Mar 18 - Havana - friendly
Cuba 3
Panama 0
HT: 1-0

Saturday, March 20

Mar 20 -friendly
St Kitts & Nevis 4
British Virgin Islands 0

Sunday, March 21

Mar 21 - friendly
Bahrain 0
Jordan 0

Mar 21 - friendly
St Kitts & Nevis 2
Antigua & Barbuda 3
HT: 0-3

Mar 21 - friendly
St Vincent & The Grenadines 1
St Lucia 1
HT: 1-1

Tuesday, March 23

Mar 23 - friendly
Bahrain 0
Jordan 2
HT: 0-1

Mar 23 - friendly
Lebanon 0
Syria 1
HT: 0-0

Friday, March 26

Mar 26 - Italy - friendly
Libya 1
Qatar 0
HT: 0-0

Mar 26 - friendly
Syria 1
Palestine 1
HT: 1-0

Tuesday, March 30

Mar 30 - Tel Aviv - friendly
Israel 2 (Balili 34, Badir 64)
Lithuania 1 (Ben-Haim og 43)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 9,782. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Israel: Davidovich - Gazal, Benado, Gershon, Ben-Haim (Ben-Yosef 72), Antebi, Badir, Tal, Afek (Tzarfati 81), Balili (Udi 66), Arbeitman (Haliva 70).
Lithuania: Stauce - Stankevicius, Dedura, Barasa (Dziaukstas 80), Skerla, Gedgaudas, Vencevicius (Beniusis 85), E Cesnauskis, Tamosauskas, Poderis (Radzinevicius 63), Morinas.

Mar 30 - London - friendly
South Africa 0
Australia 1 (Bresciano 19)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,108. **Ref:** Halsey (Eng)
South Africa: Vonk - Molefe, Carnell (Morris 33), A Mokoena, Mabizela, Mnguni (Davids 59), Pienaar (Vilakazi 74), Nomvete, Zuma, Buckley, Bartlett.
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Moore, Popovic, Skoko, Lazaridis, Emerton (Sterjovski 75), Bresciano (Cahill 75), Chipperfield, Kewell (Zdrilic 64), Viduka (Aloisi 64).

Wednesday, March 31

Mar 31 - Tirana - friendly
Albania 2 (Aliaj 42, Bushi 75)
Iceland 1 (Gudjohnsen 63)
HT: 1-0

Mar 31 - friendly
Bermuda 3
Nicaragua 0
HT: 1-0

Mar 31 - Sofia - friendly
Bulgaria 2 (Berbatov 15, 66)
Russia 2 (Sychev 9, 31)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 14,938. **Ref:** Alves Garcia (Por)
Bulgaria: Zdravkov (Ivankov 46) - Kirilov (Zagorcic 74), I Petkov, M Petkov (Dimitrov 46), Berbatov, Peev (Yanchev 62), Hristov (Jankovic 46), M Petrov (Lazarov 55), Pazin, S Petrov, Stoyanov (Topuzakov 46).
Russia: Ovchinnikov - Evseev, Sennikov, Smertin (Radimov 46), Ignashevich, Semshov, Onopko (Sharonov 46), Gusev (Bystrov 46), Bulykin, Loskov (Alenichev 46), Sychev (Kerzhakov 46).

Mar 31 - Zagreb - friendly
Croatia 2 (Sokota 2, Srna 76)
Turkey 2 (Zafer Biryol 73, Cagdas 78)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Lopes Ferreira (Por)
Croatia: Pletikosa (Butina 46) - Tokic, Simunic (D Simic 46), Tomas (Srna 59), Tudor (J Leko 46), Zivkovic, Mornar (Agic 46), Babic (Rosso 46), Prso, Rapajic (Neretljak 71), Sokota (Olic 12).
Turkey: Rustu - Fatih Akyel (Cagdas 46), Umit Ozat (Bulent Korkmaz 76), Deniz (Kenan 46), Gokdeniz (Murat 46), Ibrahim Toroman (Bulent Bolukbasi 46), Tolga (Tayfur 76), Serkan (Koray 46), Hakan Sukur (Fatih Sonkaya 88), Tuncay (Zafer Biryol 67), Nihat.

Mar 31 - friendly
Egypt 2
Trinidad & Tobago 1
HT: 0-0

Mar 31 - friendly
El Salvador 0
Guatemala 3
HT: 0-2

Mar 31 - Tallinn - friendly
Estonia 0
Northern Ireland 1 (Healy 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,900. **Ref:** Petteri (Fin)
Estonia: Kaalma - Jaager, Stepanov, Piiroja (Rahn 82), Klavan, Smirnov (Reinumae 83), Reim, Kristal, Kink (Terehhov 71), Zelinski (Teever 64), M Rooba (Lindpere 73).
N Ireland: Taylor - Baird, Craigan, Williams, Capaldi, Jones (McCann 68), Sonner (Duff 78), Whitley, Mulryne, Smith, Healy.

Mar 31 - Cologne - friendly
Germany 3 (Kuranyi 45, Hamann 55, Ballack 81)
Belgium 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,500. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
Germany: Lehmann - Friedrich, Worns, Nowotny, Lahm, Hamann, Ballack (Rahn 84), Frings (Neuville 62), Schneider (Ernst 62), Freier (Jeremies 71), Kuranyi (Bobic 78).
Belgium: Herpoel (Lemmens 59) - Deflandre (De Cock 71), Kompany, Dheedene, Van Damme (Deschacht 65), Clement, Baseggio (Dufer 59), Blondel (Daems 46), M Mpenza (Bisconti 59), Buffel, Pieroni.

Mar 31 - Iraklion - friendly
Greece 1 (Tsiartas 55)
Switzerland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 33,000. **Ref:** Temmink (Hol)
Greece: Nikopolidis - Dellas, Seitaridis (Papadopoulos 79), Katsouranis, Kapsis (Dabizas 46), Fissas (Goumas 80), Zagorakis, Giannakopoulos (Lakis 46), Tsiartas (Basinas 67), Nikolaidis, Haristeas (Vryzas 46).
Switzerland: Stiel (Zuberbuhler 46) - Haas, Henchoz, Muller, Berner, Lonfat, Celestini, Wicky, H Yakin (Gygax 60), Frei, Chapuisat (Streller 53).

Mar 31 - Rotterdam - friendly
Holland 0
France 0
Att: 50,000. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Holland: Van der Sar - Melchiot, Heitinga, Cocu, Zenden, Van der Meyde (Bosvelt 90), Van Bommel (Sneijder 46), Van der Vaart (De Jong 69), Davids, Overmars, Makaay (Van Hooijdonk 69).
France: Barthez - Sagnol, Thuram (Gallas 69), Desailly, Lizarazu (Silvestre 58), Giuly (Cheyrou 46), Makelele (Pedretti 58), Dacourt, Micoud, Trezeguet (Luyindula 69), Govou (Henry 46).

Mar 31 - Budapest - friendly
Hungary 1 (Kenesei pen 17)
Wales 2 (Koumas 20, Earnshaw 81)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Hungary: Babos - Komlosi (Dveri 89), Stark, Z Peto, Bodnar, Molnar (Bojte 80), Lisztes (Toth 52), Gera, Low (Bodor 89), Kenesei (Szabics 46), Torghelle (J Sebok 70).
Wales: P Jones (Coyne 46) - Gabbidon, Page, Melville, Thatcher (Edwards 54), Koumas, Savage, C Robinson (Fletcher 90), Vaughan (G Roberts 65), Earnshaw, Taylor.

Mar 31 - friendly
Jamaica 2 (Lowe 8, F Davis 53)
Honduras 2 (E Martinez 67, Nunez 78)
HT: 1-0

Mar 31 - Luxembourg - friendly
Luxembourg 1 (Huss 87)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Misimovic 61, Bolic 62)
HT: 0-0

Mar 31 - Skopje - friendly
Macedonia 1 (Stavrevski 26)
Ukraine 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Karagic (Ser)
Macedonia: Milosevski (Nikolovski 46) - Stavrevski (Vasoski 86), Sedloski, I Mitreski, Stojanovski (Bozinovski 62), A Mitreski (Cumbev 89), Sumulikoski (Mustafi 81), Dimitrovski (Cadikovski 46), Sakiri, Krstev, Jancevski (Toleski 65).
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Symonenko (Matiukhin 46), Parfyonov, Tymoshchuk, Rusol, Rykun, Nazarenko (Kalinichenko 81), Checher, Rotan, Husiev (Rebrov 46), Shevchenko.

Mar 31 - Valletta - friendly
Malta 1 (Michael Mifsud 90)
Finland 2 (Yeremenko 51, Litmanen 86)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Trefoloni (Ita)
Malta: M Muscat - Chetcuti, Azzopardi, Dimech, Said, Mallia, Woods (Buhagiar 76), Giglio, Michael Mifsud, Mattocks (Antoine Zahra I 57), Antoine Zahra II (Barbara 69).
Finland: A Niemi (Jaaskelainen 46), Pasanen, Saarinen (Nylund 83), Hyypia (Kuivasto 55), Tihinen, Riihilahti (Litmanen 75), Vayrynen, Kuqi (J Niemi 75), Multaharju (Kolkka 46), Kopteff (Nurmela 46), Yeremenko (Lagerblom 61).

Mar 31 - Carson, USA - friendly
Mexico 2 (R Garcia 13, D Martinez 41)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Mexico: O Sanchez - Altamirano (Briseno 61), Marquez, D Davino, Carmona, Torrado (D Martinez 10), Pardo, M Perez, R Garcia (Mendoza 61), Osorno (Zepeda 61), Borgetti (Lopez 73).
Costa Rica: De Lemos (Jara 46) - Marin (Chinchilla 46), G Martinez, Wright, Diaz, T Bennett (Bryce 53), M Solis (Sequeiro 72), Centeno, J Bennett (Saborio 46), Ledezma (A Solis 67), Gomez.

May 31 - Chisinau - friendly
Moldova 2 (Dadu pen 42, 84)
Azerbaijan 1 (G Gurbanov 20)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 5,500. **Ref:** Godulyan (Ukr)
Moldova: Melenciuc - Covalenco (Golovatenco 88), Lascencov (Andriuta 82), Olexici, Popov, Priganiuc, Covaliciuc, Ivanov, Radcenco (Hromtov 76), Corneencov, Dadu.
Azerbaijan: Gasanzade - K Guliev (Shukurov 77), Sadigov, Amirbaev, E Guliev, A Mamedov, A Kerimov, R Musaev (S Gurbanov 62), G Gurbanov, Abdullayev, M Gurbanov (Hadgiev 82).

Mar 31 - Rabat - friendly
Morocco 3 (Baha 67, 74, Zaira 77)
Angola 1 (Norberto 84)
HT: 0-0

Mar 31 - Plock - friendly
Poland 0
United States 1 (Beasley 26)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,500. **Ref:** Skjerven (Nor)
Poland: Dudek - Klos, Rzasa, Baszczynski (Hajto 46), Radomski (Szymkowiak 46), J Bak, Smolarek (Gorawski 62), Krzynowek, Rasiak (Saganowski 46), M Lewandowski (Mila 72), Zurawski.
USA: Friedel - Vanney, Berhalter, Mastroeni (Bocanegra 52), Cherundolo, Klein (Sanneh 74), Reyna, Beasley, Mathis (Zavagnin 85), Wolff (Convey 46), Casey.

Mar 31 - Braga - friendly
Portugal 1 (Nuno Valente 5)
Italy 2 (Vieri 40, Miccoli 75)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Aydin (Tur)
Portugal: Ricardo - Paulo Ferreira (Ricardo Carvalho 77), Fernando Couto (Beto 60), Jorge Andrade, Nuno Valente (Boa Morte 46), Costinha, Tiago (Deco 46), Figo (Nuno Gomes 72), Rui Costa (Miguel 72), Simao (Cristiano Ronaldo 46), Pauleta (Helder Postiga 60).
Italy: Buffon - Panucci (Oddo 58), Ferrari, Adani, Pancaro (Favalli 46), Gattuso (Perrotta 46), Pirlo (Ambrosini 46), Fiore (Camoranesi 60), Totti (Miccoli 46), Nervo (Birindelli 88), Vieri (Corradi 58).

Mar 31 - Dublin - friendly
Rep Ireland 2 (Harte 52, Robbie Keane 90)
Czech Republic 1 (Baros 81)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Fisker (Den)
Rep Ireland: Given (Kenny 82) - Maybury, Cunningham, Doherty (Miller 71), Harte, A Reid (Delap 65), Holland, Kilbane, Duff (Kinsella 76), Robbie Keane, Morrison (Lee 76).
Czech Rep: Cech (Vaniak 46) - Jiranek (Plasil 69), Bolf (Rozehnal 58), Ujfalusi, Jankulovski, Sionko (Stajner 46), Galasek, Nedved (Heinz 46), Tyce, Baros (Vorisek 84), Koller (Lokvenc 46).

Mar 31 - Glasgow - friendly
Scotland 1 (McFadden 57)
Romania 2 (Chivu 37, Pancu 51)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,433. **Ref:** Hyytia (Fin)
Scotland: Gallacher - Dailly, Pressley, Kennedy (Crainey 17), G Caldwell, G Alexander, Rae, Cameron, McCann, K Miller (McFadden 50), Thompson (Crawford 63).
Romania: Stelea (Lobont 46) - Stoican, Iencsi, Chivu, Rat, F Petre (Mitea 46), O Petre, Pancu (Danciulescu 88), Cernat (Soava 63), Mutu, Ganea (Cristea 81).

Mar 31 - Belgrade - friendly
Serbia & Montenegro 0
Norway 1 (Andresen pen 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Panic (Bos)
Serbia & Montenegro: Disljenkovic - N Djordjevic, Gavrancic, M Dudic, Ocokoljic (Zigic 84), Mladenovic (N Bmovic 77), Dragutinovic, D Stankovic (Ilic 72), Vukic, D Kovacevic, Ljuboja (Kezman 57). *Sent off: D Kovacevic 61min.*
Norway: Myhre - Basma (El Fakiri 46), Riseth, Lundekvam, Stensaas (Pedersen 46), Andresen, Hoseth (Solli 74), Helstad (Brattbakk 69), T A Flo (F Johnsen 46), Riise, Carew (Rushfeldt 80).

Mar 31 - Bratislava - friendly
Slovakia 1 (Mintal 72)
Austria 1 (Kollmann 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Vidlak (Cze)
Slovakia: Konig - Zabavnik, Kratochvil, Varga, V Labant (Gresko 46), Karhan, Demo (Mintal 46), Janocko, Michalik (Ivana 66), S Nemeth, Krejci (Vittek 46).
Austria: Payer (Mandl 55) - Dospel, Hieblinger, Stranzl, Pogatetz, Schopp (Wallner 79), Aufhauser, Scharner, Ivanschitz (Dollinger 65), Kirchler, Haas (Kollmann 70).

Mar 31 - Celje - friendly
Slovenia 0
Latvia 1 (Verpakovskis 36)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Stredak (Slk)
Slovenia: Simeunovic (Botonjic 73) - Karic (Kokot 83), Cesar (Vugdalic 75), Knavs (Cipot 67), N Ceh, Siljak, Zahovic, Pavlin (Koren 57), Bulajic (Lavric 86), Kapic (Sukalo 53), Acimovic (Rakovic 62).
Latvia: Kolinko - Zakresevskis, Astafjevs (Rubins 72), Zirnis, Laizans, Blagonadezdins, Isakovs, Bleidelis, Verpakovskis (Rimkus 75), Lobanovs, Pahars (Prohorenkovs 20; Stolcers 83).

Mar 31 - Seville - friendly
Spain 2 (Morientes 22, Raul 60)
Denmark 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,600. **Ref:** Almeida Costa (Por)
Spain: Canizares (Casillas 75) - Gabri (Michel Salgado 63), Cesar, Marchena, Capdevila, Xabi Alonso (Albelda 63), Guti (Fernando Torres 46), Etxeberria, Luque (Raul 46), Morientes (Baraja 46), Salva (Vicente 46).
Denmark: Sorensen (Andersen 46) - Priske (Colding 67), Laursen, Henriksen (Kroldrup 71), N Jensen, Gravesen, Gronkjaer, D Jensen (Larsen 82), Jorgensen (Tomasson 46), Madsen (Perez 46), C Jensen (Kahlenberg 77).

Mar 31 - Gothenburg - friendly
Sweden 1 (Ibrahimovic 54)
England 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,464. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Sweden: Isaksson (Kihlstedt 46) - Lucic, Mellberg, Mjallby (P Hansson 46), Edman, M Nilsson, A Svensson (Kallstrom 46), Anders Andersson (Linderoth 46), Wilhelmsson, Ibrahimovic (Ostlund 90), Elmander (M Jonson 46).
England: James - P Neville, Terry (Gardner 46), Woodgate (Southgate 46), Carragher, Butt (Parker 78), Hargreaves (Heskey 60), Gerrard (Jenas 60), Thompson (J Cole 60), Rooney (Smith 60), Vassell (Defoe 11).

Mar 31 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 0
Ivory Coast 2 (Drogba 34, 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Haimoudi (Alg)
Tunisia: Boumnijel - H Trabelsi, Clayton (Mkacher 46), Saidi, Jaidi (Hagui 76), Ghodhbane (Benachour 46), Nafti (Braham 76), Chedli, Bouazizi (Mnari 46), Jaziri (Jedidi 57), Santos.
Ivory Coast: Gnanhouan - Kouassi (Yapi Yapo 46), Akale, Meite, Domoraud, Guel, Boka, Zokora, Drogba (Kone 67), Die (Bakari 72), Dindane (Doba 67).

2006 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

05.06.04 .....Senegal-Congo
05.06.04 .....Zambia-Togo
06.06.04 .....Liberia-Mali
19.06.04 .....Mali-Zambia
20.06.04 .....Congo-Liberia
20.06.04 .....Togo-Senegal
03.07.04 .....Senegal-Zambia
04.07.04 .....Congo-Mali
04.07.04 .....Liberia-Togo
04.09.04 .....Mali-Senegal
04.09.04 .....Zambia-Liberia
05.09.04 .....Togo-Congo
10.10.04 .....Congo-Zambia
10.10.04 .....Liberia-Senegal
10.10.04 .....Togo-Mali
26.03.05 .....Mali-Togo
26.03.05 .....Senegal-Liberia
26.03.05 .....Zambia-Congo
04.06.05 .....Mali-Liberia
05.06.05 .....Congo-Senegal
05.06.05 .....Togo-Zambia
18.06.05 .....Senegal-Togo
18.06.05 .....Zambia-Mali
19.06.05 .....Liberia-Congo
03.09.05 .....Zambia-Senegal
04.09.05 .....Mali-Congo
04.09.05 .....Togo-Liberia
08.10.05 .....Senegal-Mali
09.10.05 .....Congo-Togo
09.10.05 .....Liberia-Zambia

Group 2

05.06.04 .....Burkina Faso-Ghana
05.06.04 .....South Africa-Cape Verde Islands
05.06.04 .....Uganda-DR Congo
20.06.04 .....Cape Verde Islands-Uganda
20.06.04 .....DR Congo-Burkina Faso
20.06.04 .....Ghana-South Africa
03.07.04 .....South Africa-Burkina Faso
03.07.04 .....Uganda-Ghana
04.07.04 .....Cape Verde Islands-DR Congo
04.09.04 .....Burkina Faso-Uganda
05.09.04 .....DR Congo-South Africa
05.09.04 .....Ghana-Cape Verde Islands
09.10.04 .....Uganda-South Africa
10.10.04 .....Cape Verde Islands-Burkina Faso
10.10.04 .....Ghana-DR Congo
26.03.05 .....Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Islands
26.03.05 .....South Africa-Uganda
27.03.05 .....DR Congo-Ghana
05.06.05 .....Cape Verde Islands-South Africa
05.06.05 .....DR Congo-Uganda
05.06.05 .....Ghana-Burkina Faso
18.06.05 .....Burkina Faso-DR Congo
18.06.05 .....South Africa-Ghana
18.06.05 .....Uganda-Cape Verde Islands
03.09.05 .....Burkina Faso-South Africa
04.09.05 .....DR Congo-Cape Verde Islands
04.09.05 .....Ghana-Uganda
08.10.05 .....South Africa-DR Congo
08.10.05 .....Uganda-Burkina Faso
09.10.05 .....Cape Verde Islands-Ghana

Group 3

06.06.04 .....Cameroon-Benin
06.06.04 .....Ivory Coast-Libya
06.06.04 .....Sudan-Egypt
18.06.04 .....Libya-Cameroon
18.06.04 .....Egypt-Ivory Coast
20.06.04 .....Benin-Sudan
04.07.04 .....Benin-Egypt
04.07.04 .....Cameroon-Ivory Coast
04.07.04 .....Sudan-Libya
03.09.04 .....Egypt-Cameroon
03.09.04 .....Libya-Benin
05.09.04 .....Ivory Coast-Sudan
08.10.04 .....Libya-Egypt
10.10.04 .....Benin-Ivory Coast
10.10.04 .....Sudan-Cameroon
25.03.05 .....Egypt-Libya
27.03.05 .....Cameroon-Sudan
27.03.05 .....Ivory Coast-Benin
03.06.05 .....Egypt-Sudan
03.06.05 .....Libya-Ivory Coast
05.06.05 .....Benin-Cameroon
19.06.05 .....Cameroon-Libya
19.06.05 .....Ivory Coast-Egypt
19.06.05 .....Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 .....Egypt-Benin
02.09.05 .....Libya-Sudan
04.09.05 .....Ivory Coast-Cameroon
09.10.05 .....Benin-Libya
09.10.05 .....Cameroon-Egypt
09.10.05 .....Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

04.06.04 .....Algeria-Angola
05.06.04 .....Gabon-Zimbabwe
05.06.04 .....Nigeria-Rwanda
20.06.04 .....Angola-Nigeria
20.06.04 .....Rwanda-Gabon
20.06.04 .....Zimbabwe-Algeria
03.07.04 .....Gabon-Angola
03.07.04 .....Nigeria-Algeria
04.07.04 .....Rwanda-Zimbabwe
03.09.04 .....Algeria-Gabon
05.09.04 .....Angola-Rwanda
05.09.04 .....Zimbabwe-Nigeria
09.10.04 .....Gabon-Nigeria
10.10.04 .....Angola-Zimbabwe
10.10.04 .....Rwanda-Algeria
25.03.05 .....Algeria-Rwanda
26.03.05 .....Nigeria-Gabon
27.03.05 .....Zimbabwe-Angola
05.06.05 .....Angola-Algeria
05.06.05 .....Rwanda-Nigeria
05.06.05 .....Zimbabwe-Gabon
17.06.05 .....Algeria-Zimbabwe
18.06.05 .....Gabon-Rwanda
18.06.05 .....Nigeria-Angola
02.09.05 .....Algeria-Nigeria
04.09.05 .....Angola-Gabon
04.09.05 .....Zimbabwe-Rwanda
08.10.05 .....Gabon-Algeria
08.10.05 .....Nigeria-Zimbabwe
09.10.05 .....Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

05.06.04 .....Kenya-Guinea
05.06.04 .....Malawi-Morocco
05.06.04 .....Tunisia-Botswana
19.06.04 .....Morocco-Kenya
20.06.04 .....Botswana-Malawi
20.06.04 .....Guinea-Tunisia
03.07.04 .....Malawi-Guinea
03.07.04 .....Tunisia-Kenya
04.07.04 .....Botswana-Morocco
04.09.04 .....Kenya-Malawi
04.09.04 .....Morocco-Tunisia
05.09.04 .....Guinea-Botswana
09.10.04 .....Malawi-Tunisia
10.10.04 .....Botswana-Kenya
10.10.04 .....Guinea-Morocco
26.03.05 .....Kenya-Botswana
26.03.05 .....Morocco-Guinea
26.03.05 .....Tunisia-Malawi
04.06.05 .....Morocco-Malawi
05.06.05 .....Botswana-Tunisia
05.06.05 .....Guinea-Kenya
18.06.05 .....Kenya-Morocco
18.06.05 .....Malawi-Botswana
18.06.05 .....Tunisia-Guinea
03.09.05 .....Kenya-Tunisia
03.09.05 .....Morocco-Botswana
04.09.05 .....Guinea-Malawi
08.10.05 .....Malawi-Kenya
08.10.05 .....Tunisia-Morocco
09.10.05 .....Botswana-Guinea

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

1st stage

Group 1

Mar 31 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Mansour 70)
Qatar 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Shaban (Kuw)
Jordan: Shafi Sabbah - Al-Awadat, Bani Yaseen, Qasem, Shelbaya (Abdel Fattah 80), Mansour, Al-Shboul, Ibrahim, Akel, Abu Zema (Abu Alieh 18), Al-Shaqran (Al-Zboun 56).
Qatar: Anyass - Al-Khater, Saad Al-Shammari (W Ahmed 66), Al-Naemi, S Al-Kathiri (Abdulmajid 77), M Al-Baloushi (Bechir 77), Fazli, Koni, Hashim, Mubark, Rajab.

Mar 31 - Vientiane
Laos 0
Iran 7 (Daei 9, pen 17, Enyati 32, 36, Khouphachansy og 54, Taghipour 68, 83)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Yang (Tai)
Laos: S Khanyyavong - Khotsombath, Vilayphong, Chalana, Tapsouvanh, Dalaphone (Viengazoun 81), Phapouvanin, Khouphachansy (Chanthalome 59), Phayvanh, Southsakhone (Thongphachan 89), Namthavisay.
Iran: Mirzapour - Taghipour, Golmohammadi, Nekoonam, Enyati, Vahedinikbakht, Kaabi (Amirabadi 73), Badavi (Borhani 79), Rajabzadeh (Navidkia 46), Karimi, Daei.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	2	2	0	0	10	1	6
Jordan	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Qatar	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Laos	2	0	0	2	0	12	0

18.02.04 .....Iran-Qatar 3-1
18.02.04 .....Jordan-Laos 5-0
31.03.04 .....Jordan-Qatar 1-0
31.03.04 .....Laos-Iran 0-7
09.06.04 .....Iran-Jordan
09.06.04 .....Qatar-Laos
08.09.04 .....Jordan-Iran
08.09.04 .....Laos-Qatar
13.10.04 .....Laos-Jordan
13.10.04 .....Qatar-Iran
17.11.04 .....Iran-Laos
17.11.04 .....Qatar-Jordan

Group 2

Mar 31 - Doha, Qatar
Palestine 1 (Beshe 71)
Iraq 1 (Razak 20)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Al-Shoufi (Syr)

Mar 31 - Taipei
Taiwan 0
Uzbekistan 1 (Koshekev 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Midi Nitrorejo (Ins)
Taiwan: Yang Cheng-hsing - Chen Jeng-i, Tsai Hui-kai, Cheng Yung-jen, Chen Jui-te, Wu Chun-i, Lin Kuei-pin (Chiang Shih-lu 85), Chang Fu-hsiang (Li Po-yuan 75), Chen Bing-shin (Tu Chia-po 64), Chang Wu-yeh, Tu Ming-feng.
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Ashurmatov, Fedorov, Koshekev (Magdeev 84), Djeparov, Soliev, Tadjiyev (Geinrih 46), Shishelov (Bikmoev 73), Kadadaze, Alikulov, Nikolaev.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palestine	2	1	1	0	9	1	4
Uzbekistan	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Iraq	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Taiwan	2	0	0	2	0	9	0

18.02.04 .....Palestine-Taiwan 8-0
18.02.04 .....Uzbekistan-Iraq 1-1
31.03.04 .....Palestine-Iraq 1-1
31.03.04 .....Taiwan-Uzbekistan 0-1
09.06.04 .....Iraq-Taiwan
09.06.04 .....Uzbekistan-Palestine
08.09.04 .....Palestine-Uzbekistan
08.09.04 .....Taiwan-Iraq
13.10.04 .....Iraq-Uzbekistan
13.10.04 .....Taiwan-Palestine
17.11.04 .....Iraq-Palestine
17.11.04 .....Uzbekistan-Taiwan

Group 3

Mar 31 - Kochin
India 1 (Renedy Singh 18)
Oman 5 (Al-Hosni 12, Al-Mahaijri 26, 49, Al-Hinai 60, 88)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 48,000. **Ref:** Kim Heng (Mly)
India: Mukherjee - Muttath, Ghosh, Lawrence, L Singh (J B Singh 54), Renedy Singh, Yadav, D'Cunha (Shanmugham 35), Gawli, Bhutia, Mandal (Bharti 75).
Oman: Al-Khatri - Al-Noobi, Maawali, Doorbeen, Al-Mahaijri, Al-Hosni (Al-Hinai 41), Al-Ghailani, Al-Balushi (Al-Toqi 54), Bait Faraj Allah, Al-Mukhaini, Al-Raqadi (Al-Naufali 78).

Mar 31 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Daud 62)
Japan 2 (Takahara 33, Fujita 81)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Bae (SKo)
Singapore: Hassan - Muhamed, Iskandar, Khaizan, Daud (Noor Ali 86), Subramani, Bennett, Ishak, Grabovac (Latiff 46), Tan Kim-leng, Nasir (Casmir 46).
Japan: Narazaki - Tsuboi, Miyamoto, Inamoto, H Nakata, Takahara (Tamada 75), Nakamura (Fujita 66), Yanagisawa (T Suzuki 68), Alex, Ono, Kaji.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Oman	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
India	2	1	0	1	2	5	3
Singapore	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

18.02.04 .....India-Singapore.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Japan-Oman.....1-0
31.03.04 .....India-Oman.....1-5
31.03.04 .....Singapore-Japan.....1-2
09.06.04 .....Japan-India
09.06.04 .....Oman-Singapore
08.09.04 .....India-Japan
08.09.04 .....Singapore-Oman
13.10.04 .....Oman-Japan
13.10.04 .....Singapore-India
17.11.04 .....Japan-Singapore
17.11.04 .....Oman-India

Group 4

Mar 31 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 0
China 1 (Hao Haidong 71)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Rungklay (Tha)
Hong Kong: Fan Chun-yip - Leung Chi-wing, Ng Wai-chiu, Lau Chi-keung, Cheung Sai-ho (Law Chun-bong 84), Wong Chun-yue, Szeto Man-chun (Luk Koon-pong 78), Lee Wai-man, Kwok Yue-hung, Chu Siu-kei, Feng Ji-zhi (Man Pei-tak 31).
China: Liu Yunfei - Yang Pu, Zheng Zhi, Sun Jihai (Zhao Xuri 70), Zhang Yuning (Li Yi 66), Wei Xin (Xu Yunlong 75), Li Weifeng, Zhao Junzhe, Xiao Zhanbo, Zheng Bin, Hao Haidong.

Mar 31 - Kuantan
Malaysia 0
Kuwait 2 (Al-Mutawa 75, Al-Harbi 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,327. **Ref:** Matsumura (Jap)
Malaysia: Azmin - Subri, Norhafiz, Hairuddin (A Muhammad 39), Eddy, Indra Putra, Akmal Rizal, Nanthan, Muhammad Kaironnisam, Nizaruddin (Mohd Khalid 75), Rosdi (Irwan 51).
Kuwait: Al-Fadhli - Asel, N Al-Shammari, Humaidan, Abdulaziz (Al-Harbi 68), Al-Fadli (M Al-Mutairi 46), Al-Enezi, A Al-Shammari (Al-Namash 71), K Al-Shammari, Al-Mutawa, Al-Dawood.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Hong Kong	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Kuwait	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Malaysia	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

18.02.04 .....China-Kuwait.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Malaysia-Hong Kong.....1-3
31.03.04 .....Hong Kong-China.....0-1
31.03.04 .....Malaysia-Kuwait.....0-2
09.06.04 .....China-Malaysia
09.06.04 .....Kuwait-Hong Kong
08.09.04 .....Hong Kong-Kuwait
08.09.04 .....Malaysia-China
13.10.04 .....Hong Kong-Malaysia
13.10.04 .....Kuwait-China
17.11.04 .....China-Hong Kong
17.11.04 .....Kuwait-Malaysia

Group 5

Mar 31 - Pyongyang
North Korea 0
United Arab Emirates 0
Att: 20,000. **Ref:** Zhou (Chn)
North Korea: Sim Sung-chol - Ri Myong-sam, Jang Sok-chol, Pak Nam-chol, Kim Yong-su, Hong Yong-jo, Sin Yong-nam, Kim Chol-ho (Mun In-guk 54; Ri Kwang-chon 87), Han Song-chol, Kim Yong-jun, Nam Song-chol.
UAE: Al-Badrani - A R Jumaa, A S Jumaa, Abdulrahman, Rashid (Al-Jaberi 69), Saeed, Rashed, Msarri, Fakher, Musabeh, S Khater (Omar 54).

Mar 31 - Sana'a
Yemen 0
Thailand 3 (Sarayoot 68, Nirut 71, Kiatisuk 87)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Mansour

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Thailand	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
North Korea	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Yemen	2	0	1	1	1	4	1

18.02.04 .....UAE-Thailand.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Yemen-North Korea.....1-1
31.03.04 .....North Korea-UAE.....0-0
31.03.04 .....Yemen-Thailand.....0-3
09.06.04 .....Thailand-North Korea
09.06.04 .....UAE-Yemen
08.09.04 .....North Korea-Thailand
08.09.04 .....Yemen-UAE
13.10.04 .....North Korea-Yemen
13.10.04 .....Thailand-UAE
17.11.04 .....Thailand-Yemen
17.11.04 .....UAE-North Korea

Group 6

Mar 31 - Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Ishenbaev 55)
Syria 1 (Kailouni 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Bose (Ind)
Kyrgyzstan: Djalilov - Samsaliev, Salo, Sydykov, Amin (Sharapov 47), Pilipas, Chertkov, Prianishnikov (Boldygin 74), Berezovsky, Ishenbaev (Chikishev 79), Kudrenko.
Syria: Saeed - Esmaeel, Kassab, Radawi (Alkaddor 85), Alhoussain (Kailouni 72), Sayed (Rafe 76), Al-Khatib, Istanbali, Jenyat, Aqraa, Refaee.

Mar 31 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 0
Bahrain 0
Att: 17,000. **Ref:** Maidin (Sin)
Tajikistan: Khabibulloev - Fuzailov, Turdiev, Zuvaydov (Tabarov 39), Toukthaev (Boboev 77), Kholomatov, Burkhanov, Muhidinov, Shamsiev (Irgashev 48), Umarbaev, Rahimov.
Bahrain: Saeed - Al-Kawari, R Al-Dosari, Salmeen, F A Mohammed, Basheer, Yusuf Mohamed, Ghuloom, Mahfoodh, Ali Ahmed (Jalal 69), A Hubail (Al-Hanfi 58).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bahrain	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Tajikistan	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Kyrgyzstan	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Syria	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

18.02.04 .....Bahrain-Syria.....2-1
18.02.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan.....1-2
31.03.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Syria.....1-1
31.03.04 .....Tajikistan-Bahrain.....0-0
09.06.04 .....Bahrain-Kyrgyzstan
09.06.04 .....Syria-Tajikistan
08.09.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Bahrain
08.09.04 .....Tajikistan-Syria
13.10.04 .....Syria-Bahrain
13.10.04 .....Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan
17.11.04 .....Bahrain-Tajikistan
17.11.04 .....Syria-Kyrgyzstan

Group 7

Mar 31 - Male
Maldives 0
South Korea 0
Att: 12,000. **Ref:** Vidanagamage (Sri)
Maldives: Imran Mohamed - Luthfee (Nasir 68), Fazeel (Ismail Mohamed 90), Nizam, Jameel, Umar, Ghani, I Ibrahim, Ghanee, Luthfy, S M Ibrahim.
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Choi Jin-cheul, Kim Nam-il, Kim Tae-young (Kim Dae-eui 61), Seol Ki-hyeon, Chung Kyung-ho, Lee Young-pyo, Lee Eul-yong (Lee Kwan-woo 82), Ahn Jung-hwan (Park Yo-seb 74), Song Chong-gug, Cho Byung-kuk.

Mar 31 - Nam Dinh
Vietnam 0
Lebanon 2 (Antar 83, Hamiye 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Vietnam: Nguyen The Anh - Le Van Truong (Tran Hai Lam 57), Nguyen Huy Hoang, Nguyen Trung Kien (Trinh Xuan Thanh 46), Pham Van Quyen, Le Hong Minh, Nguyen Minh Phuong, Nguyen Huu Thang (Le Quoc Vuong 57), Nguyen Manh Dung, Phan Thanh Binh, Phan Van Tai Em. *Sent off: Nguyen Huy Hoang 84min.*
Lebanon: Samad - Youssef, Kinaan, Abbas Ali Atwi (Salame 78), A Al-Attar, Fernandez, Najarin, O Al-Attar (Shahrour 90), Antar, Hamiye, Shahoud (Naserdeen 61).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Vietnam	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Lebanon	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Maldives	2	0	1	1	0	4	1

18.02.04 .....South Korea-Lebanon.....2-0
18.02.04 .....Vietnam-Maldives.....4-0
31.03.04 .....Maldives-South Korea.....0-0
31.03.04 .....Vietnam-Lebanon.....0-2
09.06.04 .....Lebanon-Maldives
09.06.04 .....South Korea-Vietnam
08.09.04 .....Maldives-Lebanon
08.09.04 .....Vietnam-South Korea
13.10.04 .....Lebanon-South Korea
13.10.04 .....Maldives-Vietnam
17.11.04 .....Lebanon-Vietnam
17.11.04 .....South Korea-Maldives

Group 8

Mar 31 - Colombo
Sri Lanka 0
Saudi Arabia 1 (I Al-Shahrani 53)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chynybekov (Kyr)

Mar 31 - Ashgabat
Turkmenistan 3 (V Bayramov 10, 74, Kuliev 35)
Indonesia 1 (Budi 30)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Sahib Shakir (Irq)
Turkmenistan: Harchik - Gochkuliev, Dourduev, Mingazov, Agabaev (Nazarov 79), Rejepov, O Berdiyev, Haydarov (Mirzoev 59), Kuliev, V Bayramov, N Bayramov.
Indonesia: Christian - Setyabudi (Tecuari 88), Sugiantoro, Ardi, Ichwan (Aiboi 70), Astaman, Budi, Bachri (Kurniawan 89), Saputra, Bambang, Pulalo.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkmenistan	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Saudi Arabia	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Sri Lanka	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Indonesia	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

18.02.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Indonesia.....3-0
18.02.04 .....Turkmenistan-Sri Lanka.....2-0
31.03.04 .....Sri Lanka-Saudi Arabia.....0-1
31.03.04 .....Turkmenistan-Indonesia.....3-1
09.06.04 .....Indonesia-Sri Lanka
09.06.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Turkmenistan
08.09.04 .....Sri Lanka-Indonesia
08.09.04 .....Turkmenistan-Saudi Arabia
13.10.04 .....Indonesia-Saudi Arabia
13.10.04 .....Sri Lanka-Turkmenistan
17.11.04 .....Indonesia-Turkmenistan
17.11.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Sri Lanka

Group winners advance to 2nd stage

2nd stage

The eight qualifiers are divided into two groups of four. The winners and runners-up of these groups qualify for finals. The two third-placed sides meet in a two-leg play-off, the winner of which meets the fourth-placed CONCACAF team in a play-off for a place in finals

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

1st stage

Group 1

Mar 14 - Berbice
Guyana 1 (Harris 29)
Grenada 3 (Charles 15, Roberts 69, B Bubb 87)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 1,200. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Grenada 8-1 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Guyana: Durant - Cadogan, Jilgeous, Moore, Carroll (Waterton 46), McKinnon (Brown 73), Codrington (Abrams 86), G Richardson, Harris, Beveney, Archer.
Grenada: K Baptiste - James, F Baptiste, Joseph, Charles (Bishop 80), A Modeste, P Modeste, Benjamin, Bedeau (B Bubb 81), Lee (Phillip 51), Roberts.

Game 1
28.02.04 .....Grenada-Guyana.....5-0
14.03.04 .....Guyana-Grenada.....1-3
.....*Grenada 8-1 on agg*
Game 2
13.06.04 .....United States-Grenada
19.06.04 .....Grenada-United States

Group 2

Mar 21 - Plymouth
Montserrat 0
Bermuda 7 (Hill 15, Nusum 21, 44, Bean 39, K Smith 45, 46, Ming 76)
HT: 0-5. **Att:** 250. **Ref:** Charles (Dom)
Bermuda 20-0 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Montserrat: Joyce (Wright 65) - Rodney, Williams, Antoine, V Farrell, Ponde, Dyer, Joseph, Harper, C Farrell (Thompson 81), Laborde. *Sent off: Laborde 75min.*
Bermuda: Hall - Thomas, Burgess, K Jennings, Steede (Hunt 68), Hill, Nusum (Astwood 68), Bean, K Smith, Dill, Ming.

Game 1
29.02.04 .....Bermuda-Montserrat.....13-0
21.03.04 .....Montserrat-Bermuda.....0-7
.....*Bermuda 20-0 on agg*
12.06.04 .....El Salvador-Bermuda
19.06.04 .....Bermuda-El Salvador

Group 3

Game 1
18.02.04 .....Haiti-Turks & Caicos Is.....5-0
21.02.04 .....Turks & Caicos Is-Haiti.....0-2
.....*Haiti 7-0 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Haiti-Jamaica
19.06.04 .....Jamaica-Haiti

Group 4

Mar 28 - Vieux Fort
St Lucia 9 (Emmanuel pen 13, 66, E Joseph 26, Jean 28, 52, Skeete 49, 55, Elva 69, Baptiste 90)
British Virgin Islands 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Corrivault (Can)
St Lucia 10-0 on agg; qualify for Game 2
St Lucia: Deterville - Tobie, Lastic, E Joseph, Emmanuel, Mark, Jean (Blanchard 80), Skeete, Elva (Laurencin 79), Valcin, V Joseph (Baptiste 60).
British Virgin Is: Butler - T Williams (Azille 46), Hall, Savage, Simmons (Lennon 49), Alexander, Morris, P Williams, Wearmouth (Roach 58), Cain, Haynes.

Game 1
22.02.04 .....British Virgin Is-St Lucia.....0-1
28.03.04 .....St Lucia-British Virgin Is.....9-0
.....*St Lucia 10-0 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Panama-St Lucia
19.06.04 .....St Lucia-Panama

Group 5

Mar 27 - Havana
Cuba 3 (More 7, 50, 66)
Cayman Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Cuba 5-1 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Cuba: Molina - Minoso, Marquez, Cruzata, L Perez, Cervantes, More (Marten 69), Herrera, Galindo, Colone (Pedraza 46), Pereira (Morales 60).

Cayman Islands: Coleman - F Wilks, Fisher, Elliot, Pierre (M Forbes 46), Brown (Challenger 89), A Forbes, Watler, Lindo (Rowe 64), Thomas, Anderson. *Sent off: Fisher 37min.*

Game 1
22.02.04 .....Cayman Islands-Cuba 1-2
27.03.04 .....Cuba-Cayman Islands 3-0
.....*Cuba 5-1 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Cuba-Costa Rica
19.06.04 .....Costa Rica-Cuba

Group 6

Mar 27 - Paramaribo
Surinam 8 (Kinsaini 6, 49, Loswijk 14, Felter 18, 65, 66, Sandvliet 42, Zinhagel 90)
Aruba 1 (M Escalona 24)
HT: 4-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
Surinam 10-2 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Surinam: Blokland - Doelbakir, Amelo, Felter, Linger, Kinsaini, Uralime, Sandvliet (Grootfaam 76), Panka (Emanuelson 75), Lupson, Loswijk (Zinhagel 59).
Aruba: Pantophlet - Valdez, Zimmerman, D Escalona, R Lake (Cabrera 72), Gomez, M Escalona, Nouwen, Pimienta, Lopez (Connor 28), Celaire. *Sent off: Celaire 65min.*

Game 1
28.02.04 .....Aruba-Surinam.....1-2
27.03.04 .....Surinam-Aruba.....8-1
.....*Surinam 10-2 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Surinam-Guatemala
19.06.04 .....Guatemala-Surinam

Group 7

Mar 31 - Willemstad
Dutch Antilles 3 (Siberie 27, Martha 45, Hose 48)
Antigua & Barbuda 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Piper (T&T)
Dutch Antilles 3-2 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Dutch Antilles: Pisas - Rijaard, Mongen (Cijntje 79), Martha, D Winklaar, Jones, Franken, Roos, Siberie, Hose (Forbuis 68), Hernandez (Mauris 46). *Sent off: Mauris 52min.*
Antigua & Barbuda: E Anthony - Cyrillien, S Anthony, James, Skepple, T Thomas (Gonsalves 46), Jeffers, Christian, Dublin, Clarke (Watts 68), Frederick (Byers 81). *Sent off: Christian 75min.*

Game 1
18.02.04 .....Antigua & Barb-Dutch Antilles 2-0
31.03.04 .....Dutch Antilles-Antigua & Barb 3-0
.....*Dutch Antilles 3-2 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Dutch Antilles-Honduras
19.06.04 .....Honduras-Dutch Antilles

Group 8

13.06.04 .....Canada-Belize
16.06.04 .....Belize-Canada

Group 9

Mar 26 - Nassau, Bahamas
Dominica 1 (Casimir 88)
Bahamas 1 (Horton 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** Forde (Bar)
Dominica: Angol - Ettienne, Dyer (George 78), Cuffy, Marshall, Joseph, Peters (Smith 84), Francis, Victor, Dangler, Casimir.
Bahamas: Mullings (Whylly 44) - Swaby (Rolle 65), Neville, Degregory, Christie, Altidor, Bethel (McKenzie 89), Moussis, Davis, Jean, Horton.

Mar 28 - Nassau
Bahamas 1 (Jean 67)
Dominica 3 (Casimir 39, 86, Peters 85)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 900. **Ref:** Pineda (Hnd)
Dominica 4-2 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Bahamas: Whylly - Swaby, Neville (Davis 67), Degregory, Christie, Altidor, Bethel (Smith 57), Moussis, Jean, Horton (McKenzie 35), Hepple. *Sent off: Altidor 75min.*
Dominica: Angol - Ettienne, Pierre-Louis, Cuffy (Williams 62), Marshall, Joseph, George, Casimir (Toussaint 89), Dangler, Smith (Peters 65), Francis. *Sent off: Ettienne 39min.*

Game 1
26.03.04 .....Dominica-Bahamas.....1-1
28.03.04 .....Bahamas-Dominica.....1-3
.....*Dominica 4-2 on agg*

Game 2
12.06.04 .....Mexico-Dominica
19.06.04 .....Dominica-Mexico

Group 10

Mar 31 - Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 7 (Lake 8, 38, 46, 56, 77, G Isaac 80, 90)
US Virgin Islands 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 800. **Ref:** Recinos (ElS)
St Kitts & Nevis 11-0 on agg; qualify for Game 2
St Kitts & Nevis: Benjamin - Eddy, T Riley, Lewis, Leader, G Isaac, J Francis (Greaux 53), Lake, K Saddler (Jarvis 69), Williams, Hodge (Huggins 58).
US Virgin Is: Jones - Thomas, Taylor, Arnold, Ferguson, Bailey (Adjoha 46), Cornelius, Labadie (Bannis 54), Wrensford, Appleton, Stephens (Walters 63).

Game 1
18.02.04 .....US Virgin Is-St Kitts & Nevis.....0-4
31.03.04 .....St Kitts & Nevis-US Virgin Is.....7-0
.....*St Kitts & Nevis 11-0 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Barbados-St Kitts & Nevis
19.06.04 .....St Kitts & Nevis-Barbados

Group 11

Mar 19 - Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic 0
Anguilla 0
Att: 400. **Ref:** Mattus (CR)
Dominican Rep: Lloyd - Medina, Taveras, Severino, F Reyes (C Reyes 46), Zapata, Sanchez (Morillo 62), Contrera, Arias (Casquez 75), W Tejada, Alvarez.
Anguilla: M Connor - N Connor, Hawley, Abbott, G Connor, Jeffers, Rogers (I Benjamin 70), W Benjamin, Edwards, Conner (Flemming 84), S Kentish.

Mar 21 - Santo Domingo, Dominican Rep
Anguilla 0
Dominican Republic 6 (Zapata 15, Severino 38, 61, Contrera 57, 90, Casquez 77)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 850. **Ref:** Porras (CR)
Dominican Rep 6-0 on agg; qualify for Game 2
Anguilla: M Connor - N Connor, K Kentish, Hawley, Abbott, G Connor, Jeffers, W Benjamin (Flemming 45), Conner, S Kentish (Hodge 70), I Benjamin (Smith 73).
Dominican Rep: Lloyd - Taveras, Vasquez, Medina, Severino (Casquez 64), Zapata (Koury 75), Sanchez, Contrera, Arias (C Reyes 53), W Tejada, Alvarez.

Game 1
19.03.04 .....Dominican Republic-Anguilla.....0-0
21.03.04 .....Anguilla-Dominican Republic.....0-6
.....*Dominican Rep 6-0 on agg*
Game 2
12.06.04 .....Dominican Rep-Trinidad & Tobago
19.06.04 .....Trinidad & Tobago-Dominican Rep

Group 12

12.06.04 .....Nicaragua-St Vincent & Grenadines
19.06.04 .....St Vincent & Grenadines-Nicaragua

Game 2/group winners advance to 2nd stage

2nd stage

Group 1

Winners of 1st stage groups 1, 2, 3 4

Group 2

Winners of 1st stage groups 5, 6, 7, 8

Group 3

Winners of 1st stage groups 9, 10, 11, 12

Top two from each group advance to 3rd stage

3rd stage

The six qualifiers play in a single group, the top three from which qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off in a play-off for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

18.08.04 .....Macedonia-Armenia
18.08.04 .....Romania-Finland
04.09.04 .....Finland-Andorra
04.09.04 .....Romania-Macedonia
08.09.04 .....Andorra-Romania
08.09.04 .....Armenia-Finland
08.09.04 .....Holland-Czech Republic
09.10.04 .....Czech Republic-Romania
09.10.04 .....Finland-Armenia
09.10.04 .....Macedonia-Holland
13.10.04 .....Andorra-Macedonia
13.10.04 .....Armenia-Czech Republic
13.10.04 .....Holland-Finland
17.11.04 .....Andorra-Holland
17.11.04 .....Armenia-Romania
17.11.04 .....Macedonia-Czech Republic
09.02.05 .....Macedonia-Andorra
26.03.05 .....Armenia-Andorra
26.03.05 .....Czech Republic-Finland
26.03.05 .....Romania-Holland
30.03.05 .....Andorra-Czech Republic
30.03.05 .....Holland-Armenia
30.03.05 .....Macedonia-Romania
04.06.05 .....Armenia-Macedonia
04.06.05 .....Czech Republic-Andorra
04.06.05 .....Holland-Romania
08.06.05 .....Czech Republic-Macedonia
08.06.05 .....Finland-Holland
08.06.05 .....Romania-Armenia
17.08.05 .....Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05 .....Romania-Andorra
03.09.05 .....Andorra-Finland
03.09.05 .....Armenia-Holland
03.09.05 .....Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05 .....Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05 .....Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05 .....Holland-Andorra
08.10.05 .....Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05 .....Finland-Romania
12.10.05 .....Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05 .....Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05 .....Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

04.09.04 .....Albania-Greece
04.09.04 .....Denmark-Ukraine
04.09.04 .....Turkey-Georgia
08.09.04 .....Georgia-Albania
08.09.04 .....Greece-Turkey
08.09.04 .....Kazakhstan-Ukraine
09.10.04 .....Albania-Denmark
09.10.04 .....Turkey-Kazakhstan
09.10.04 .....Ukraine-Greece
13.10.04 .....Denmark-Turkey
13.10.04 .....Kazakhstan-Albania
13.10.04 .....Ukraine-Georgia
17.11.04 .....Georgia-Denmark
17.11.04 .....Greece-Kazakhstan
17.11.04 .....Turkey-Ukraine
09.02.05 .....Albania-Ukraine
09.02.05 .....Greece-Denmark
09.02.05 .....Kazakhstan-Georgia
26.03.05 .....Denmark-Kazakhstan
26.03.05 .....Georgia-Greece
26.03.05 .....Turkey-Albania
30.03.05 .....Georgia-Turkey
30.03.05 .....Greece-Albania
30.03.05 .....Ukraine-Denmark
04.06.05 .....Albania-Georgia
04.06.05 .....Turkey-Greece
04.06.05 .....Ukraine-Kazakhstan
08.06.05 .....Denmark-Albania
08.06.05 .....Greece-Ukraine
08.06.05 .....Kazakhstan-Turkey
03.09.05 .....Albania-Kazakhstan
03.09.05 .....Georgia-Ukraine
03.09.05 .....Turkey-Denmark
07.09.05 .....Denmark-Georgia
07.09.05 .....Kazakhstan-Greece
07.09.05 .....Ukraine-Turkey
08.10.05 .....Denmark-Greece
08.10.05 .....Georgia-Kazakhstan
08.10.05 .....Ukraine-Albania
12.10.05 .....Albania-Turkey
12.10.05 .....Greece-Georgia
12.10.05 .....Kazakhstan-Denmark

Group 3

18.08.04 .....Liechtenstein-Estonia
18.08.04 .....Slovakia-Luxembourg
04.09.04 .....Estonia-Luxembourg
04.09.04 .....Latvia-Portugal
04.09.04 .....Russia-Slovakia
08.09.04 .....Luxembourg-Latvia
08.09.04 .....Portugal-Estonia
08.09.04 .....Slovakia-Liechtenstein
09.10.04 .....Liechtenstein-Portugal
09.10.04 .....Luxembourg-Russia
09.10.04 .....Slovakia-Latvia
13.10.04 .....Latvia-Estonia
13.10.04 .....Luxembourg-Liechtenstein
13.10.04 .....Portugal-Russia
17.11.04 .....Liechtenstein-Latvia
17.11.04 .....Luxembourg-Portugal
17.11.04 .....Russia-Estonia
26.03.05 .....Estonia-Slovakia
26.03.05 .....Liechtenstein-Russia
30.03.05 .....Estonia-Russia
30.03.05 .....Latvia-Luxembourg
30.03.05 .....Slovakia-Portugal
04.06.05 .....Estonia-Liechtenstein
04.06.05 .....Portugal-Slovakia
04.06.05 .....Russia-Latvia
08.06.05 .....Estonia-Portugal
08.06.05 .....Latvia-Liechtenstein
08.06.05 .....Luxembourg-Slovakia
17.08.05 .....Latvia-Russia
17.08.05 .....Liechtenstein-Slovakia
03.09.05 .....Estonia-Latvia
03.09.05 .....Portugal-Luxembourg
03.09.05 .....Russia-Liechtenstein
07.09.05 .....Latvia-Slovakia
07.09.05 .....Liechtenstein-Luxembourg
07.09.05 .....Russia-Portugal
08.10.05 .....Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.10.05 .....Russia-Luxembourg
08.10.05 .....Slovakia-Estonia
12.10.05 .....Luxembourg-Estonia
12.10.05 .....Portugal-Latvia
12.10.05 .....Slovakia-Russia

Group 4

04.09.04 .....France-Israel
04.09.04 .....Rep Ireland-Cyprus
04.09.04 .....Switzerland-Faroe Islands
08.09.04 .....Faroe Islands-France
08.09.04 .....Israel-Cyprus
08.09.04 .....Switzerland-Rep Ireland
09.10.04 .....Cyprus-Faroe Islands
09.10.04 .....France-Rep Ireland
09.10.04 .....Israel-Switzerland
13.10.04 .....Cyprus-France
13.10.04 .....Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands
17.11.04 .....Cyprus-Israel
26.03.05 .....Israel-Rep Ireland
26.03.05 .....France-Switzerland
30.03.05 .....Israel-France
30.03.05 .....Switzerland-Cyprus
04.06.05 .....Faroe Islands-Switzerland
04.06.05 .....Rep Ireland-Israel
08.06.05 .....Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland
17.08.05 .....Faroe Islands-Cyprus
03.09.05 .....France-Faroe Islands
03.09.05 .....Switzerland-Israel
07.09.05 .....Cyprus-Switzerland
07.09.05 .....Faroe Islands-Israel
07.09.05 .....Rep Ireland-France
08.10.05 .....Cyprus-Rep Ireland
08.10.05 .....Switzerland-France
08.10.05 .....Israel-Faroe Islands
12.10.05 .....France-Cyprus
12.10.05 .....Rep Ireland-Switzerland

Group 5

04.09.04 .....Italy-Norway
04.09.04 .....Slovenia-Moldova
08.09.04 .....Moldova-Italy
08.09.04 .....Norway-Belarus
08.09.04 .....Scotland-Slovenia
09.10.04 .....Belarus-Moldova
09.10.04 .....Scotland-Norway
09.10.04 .....Slovenia-Italy
13.10.04 .....Italy-Belarus
13.10.04 .....Moldova-Scotland
13.10.04 .....Norway-Slovenia
26.03.05 .....Italy-Scotland
30.03.05 .....Moldova-Norway
30.03.05 .....Slovenia-Belarus
04.06.05 .....Belarus-Slovenia
04.06.05 .....Norway-Italy
04.06.05 .....Scotland-Moldova

08.06.05 .....Belarus-Scotland
03.09.05 .....Moldova-Belarus
03.09.05 .....Scotland-Italy
03.09.05 .....Slovenia-Norway
07.09.05 .....Belarus-Italy
07.09.05 .....Moldova-Slovenia
07.09.05 .....Norway-Scotland
08.10.05 .....Italy-Slovenia
08.10.05 .....Norway-Moldova
08.10.05 .....Scotland-Belarus
12.10.05 .....Belarus-Norway
12.10.05 .....Italy-Moldova
12.10.05 .....Slovenia-Scotland

Group 6

04.09.04 .....Austria-England
04.09.04 .....Azerbaijan-Wales
04.09.04 .....Northern Ireland-Poland
08.09.04 .....Austria-Azerbaijan
08.09.04 .....Poland-England
08.09.04 .....Wales-Northern Ireland
09.10.04 .....Austria-Poland
09.10.04 .....Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland
09.10.04 .....England-Wales
13.10.04 .....Azerbaijan-England
13.10.04 .....Northern Ireland-Austria
13.10.04 .....Wales-Poland
26.03.05 .....England-Northern Ireland
26.03.05 .....Poland-Azerbaijan
26.03.05 .....Wales-Austria
30.03.05 .....Austria-Wales
30.03.05 .....England-Azerbaijan
30.03.05 .....Poland-Northern Ireland
04.06.05 .....Azerbaijan-Poland
03.09.05 .....Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan
03.09.05 .....Poland-Austria
03.09.05 .....Wales-England
07.09.05 .....Azerbaijan-Austria
07.09.05 .....Northern Ireland-England
07.09.05 .....Poland-Wales
08.10.05 .....England-Austria
08.10.05 .....Northern Ireland-Wales
12.10.05 .....Austria-Northern Ireland
12.10.05 .....England-Poland
12.10.05 .....Wales-Azerbaijan

Group 7

04.09.04 .....Belgium-Lithuania
04.09.04 .....San Marino-Serbia & Montenegro
08.09.04 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Spain
08.09.04 .....Lithuania-San Marino
09.10.04 .....Bosnia-Herz.-Serbia & Montenegro
09.10.04 .....Spain-Belgium
13.10.04 .....Lithuania-Spain
13.10.04 .....Serbia & Montenegro-San Marino
17.11.04 .....Belgium-Serbia & Montenegro
17.11.04 .....San Marino-Lithuania
09.02.05 .....Spain-San Marino
26.03.05 .....Belgium-Bosnia-Herzegovina
30.03.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Lithuania
30.03.05 .....San Marino-Belgium
30.03.05 .....Serbia & Montenegro-Spain
04.06.05 .....San Marino-Bosnia-Herzegovina
04.06.05 .....Serbia & Montenegro-Belgium
04.06.05 .....Spain-Lithuania
08.06.05 .....Spain-Bosnia-Herzegovina
03.09.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Belgium
03.09.05 .....Serbia & Montenegro-Lithuania
07.09.05 .....Belgium-San Marino
07.09.05 .....Lithuania-Bosnia-Herzegovina
07.09.05 .....Spain-Serbia & Montenegro
08.10.05 .....Belgium-Spain
08.10.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-San Marino
08.10.05 .....Lithuania-Serbia & Montenegro
12.10.05 .....Lithuania-Belgium
12.10.05 .....San Marino-Spain
12.10.05 .....Serbia & Montenegro-Bosnia-Herz.

Group 8

04.09.04 .....Croatia-Hungary
04.09.04 .....Iceland-Bulgaria
04.09.04 .....Malta-Sweden
08.09.04 .....Hungary-Iceland
08.09.04 .....Sweden-Croatia
09.10.04 .....Croatia-Bulgaria
09.10.04 .....Malta-Iceland
09.10.04 .....Sweden-Hungary
13.10.04 .....Bulgaria-Malta
13.10.04 .....Iceland-Sweden
17.11.04 .....Malta-Hungary
26.03.05 .....Bulgaria-Sweden
26.03.05 .....Croatia-Iceland
30.03.05 .....Croatia-Malta
30.03.05 .....Hungary-Bulgaria
04.06.05 .....Bulgaria-Croatia
04.06.05 .....Iceland-Hungary
04.06.05 .....Sweden-Malta
08.06.05 .....Iceland-Malta
03.09.05 .....Hungary-Malta
03.09.05 .....Iceland-Croatia
03.09.05 .....Sweden-Bulgaria
07.09.05 .....Bulgaria-Iceland
07.09.05 .....Hungary-Sweden
07.09.05 .....Malta-Croatia
08.10.05 .....Bulgaria-Hungary
08.10.05 .....Croatia-Sweden
12.10.05 .....Hungary-Croatia
12.10.05 .....Malta-Bulgaria
12.10.05 .....Sweden-Iceland

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals*
**Group runners-up will be ranked according to their results against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th in their respective groups*

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

1st stage

Group 1

Tahiti
Solomon Islands
New Caledonia
Tonga
Cook Islands
Ties to be played in the Solomon Islands, May 10-19, 2004

Group 2

Fiji
Vanuatu
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
American Samoa
Ties to be played in Samoa, May 10-19, 2004

Top two from each group advance to 2nd stage
Byes to 2nd stage: Australia, New Zealand

2nd stage

The six qualifiers play in a single group. The group winners and runners-up advance to 3rd stage

3rd stage

The two qualifiers meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which meet the fifth-placed South American team in a play-off for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

Mar 30 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 1 (Crespo 60)
Ecuador 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Argentina: Cavallero - Ayala, Sorin, C Rodriguez, L Gonzalez, Heinze, M Gonzalez (Tevez 46), D'Alessandro, Aimar (Riquelme 55), C Delgado (Burdisso 66), Crespo.
Ecuador: Cevallos - I Hurtado, De la Cruz, Obregon, C Tenorio (Salas 73), M Ayovi, Chala (Delgado 63), G Espinoza, Reasco, Mendez, E Tenorio (Kaviedes 67).

Mar 30 - La Paz
Bolivia 0
Chile 2 (Villarroel 38, Mark Gonzalez 60)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Martin (Arg)
Bolivia: J C Fernandez - O Sanchez, Pena, Pizarro, Roger Suarez (Ribeiro 46), Angulo, Reyes (Vaca 61), Pachi, Da Rosa, Castillo, Botero (Mendez 46).
Chile: N Tapia - R Rojas, J Vargas, Olarra, R Perez, Villarroel (Maldonado 55), Melendez, Mark Gonzalez, Martel (Valenzuela 74), Salas, Galaz (Pinilla 55).

Mar 31 - Asuncion
Paraguay 0
Brazil 0
Att: 40,000. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Paraguay: Tavarelli - Arce, J C Caceres (Da Silva 73), Gamarra, Bonet (A Ortiz 30), Paredes, Toledo (Campos 56), Enciso, Caniza, Cardozo, Santa Cruz.
Brazil: Dida - Cafu, Lucio, Roque Junior, Roberto Carlos, Renato (Juninho Pernambucano 67), Gilberto Silva, Ze Roberto, Kaka, Ronaldinho, Ronaldo.

Mar 31 - Lima
Peru 0
Colombia 2 (Grisales 30, Oviedo 42)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 29,325. **Ref:** Rezende (Bra)
Peru: Ibanez - Rebosio, Jorge Soto, Hidalgo (Farfan 46), Jayo, Palacios (Silva 58), Quinteros (Salas 46), Ciurlizza, Galliquio, Pizarro, Mendoza.
Colombia: Calero - I Cordoba, Yepes, Vargas, Oviedo, Murillo (Viveros 72), Perea, Ramirez (Viafara 90), Grisales (Patino 78), Bedoya, Angel.

Mar 31 - Montevideo
Uruguay 0
Venezuela 3 (Urdaneta 18, H Gonzalez 65, Arango 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Uruguay: Munua - Lopez, Sorondo, Dario Rodriguez, Liguera, Sosa, Nunez, Recoba, Chevanton (Correa 59), Hornos (Pandiani 46), Forlan (Bueno 72). *Sent off: Lopez 75min.*
Venezuela: Angelucci - Vallenilla, Rey, Cichero, Hernandez, Jimenez, L Vera, Paez (Rojas 61), Arango (A Gonzalez 83), Urdaneta (H Gonzalez 61), Rondon.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	5	3	2	0	10	3	11
Paraguay	5	3	1	1	8	6	10
Brazil	5	2	3	0	7	5	9
Venezuela	5	3	0	2	6	6	9
Chile	5	2	1	2	7	6	7
Uruguay	5	2	1	2	11	11	7
Peru	5	1	2	2	6	6	5
Ecuador	5	1	1	3	3	4	4
Colombia	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Bolivia	5	1	0	4	5	12	3

06.09.03 .....Argentina-Chile 2-2
06.09.03 .....Ecuador-Venezuela 2-0
06.09.03 .....Peru-Paraguay 4-1
07.09.03 .....Colombia-Brazil 1-2
07.09.03 .....Uruguay-Bolivia 5-0
09.09.03 .....Chile-Peru 2-1
09.09.03 .....Venezuela-Argentina 0-3
10.09.03 .....Bolivia-Colombia 4-0
10.09.03 .....Brazil-Ecuador 1-0
10.09.03 .....Paraguay-Uruguay 4-1
15.11.03 .....Argentina-Bolivia 3-0
15.11.03 .....Colombia-Venezuela 0-1
15.11.03 .....Paraguay-Ecuador 2-1
15.11.03 .....Uruguay-Chile 2-1
16.11.03 .....Peru-Brazil 1-1
18.11.03 .....Chile-Paraguay 0-1
18.11.03 .....Venezuela-Bolivia 2-1
19.11.03 .....Brazil-Uruguay 3-3
19.11.03 .....Colombia-Argentina 1-1
19.11.03 .....Ecuador-Peru 0-0
30.03.04 .....Argentina-Ecuador 1-0
30.03.04 .....Bolivia-Chile 0-2
31.03.04 .....Paraguay-Brazil 0-0
31.03.04 .....Peru-Colombia 0-2
31.03.04 .....Uruguay-Venezuela 0-3
01/02.06.04 ....Bolivia-Paraguay
01/02.06.04 ....Brazil-Argentina
01/02.06.04 ....Ecuador-Colombia
01/02.06.04 ....Uruguay-Peru
01/02.06.04 ....Venezuela-Chile
04/05.06.04 ....Argentina-Paraguay
04/05.06.04 ....Chile-Brazil
04/05.06.04 ....Colombia-Uruguay
04/05.06.04 ....Ecuador-Bolivia
04/05.06.04 ....Peru-Venezuela
04/05.09.04 ....Brazil-Bolivia
04/05.09.04 ....Chile-Colombia
04/05.09.04 ....Paraguay-Venezuela
04/05.09.04 ....Peru-Argentina
04/05.09.04 ....Uruguay-Ecuador
09/10.10.04 ....Argentina-Uruguay
09/10.10.04 ....Bolivia-Peru
09/10.10.04 ....Colombia-Paraguay
09/10.10.04 ....Ecuador-Chile
09/10.10.04 ....Venezuela-Brazil
12/13.10.04 ....Bolivia-Uruguay
12/13.10.04 ....Brazil-Colombia
12/13.10.04 ....Chile-Argentina
12/13.10.04 ....Paraguay-Peru
12/13.10.04 ....Venezuela-Ecuador
16/17.11.04 ....Argentina-Venezuela
16/17.11.04 ....Colombia-Bolivia
16/17.11.04 ....Ecuador-Brazil
16/17.11.04 ....Peru-Chile
16/17.11.04 ....Uruguay-Paraguay
26/27.03.05 ....Bolivia-Argentina
26/27.03.05 ....Brazil-Peru
26/27.03.05 ....Chile-Uruguay
26/27.03.05 ....Ecuador-Paraguay
26/27.03.05 ....Venezuela-Colombia
29/30.03.05 ....Argentina-Colombia
29/30.03.05 ....Bolivia-Venezuela
29/30.03.05 ....Paraguay-Chile
29/30.03.05 ....Peru-Ecuador
29/30.03.05 ....Uruguay-Brazil
04/05.06.05 ....Brazil-Paraguay
04/05.06.05 ....Chile-Bolivia
04/05.06.05 ....Colombia-Peru
04/05.06.05 ....Ecuador-Argentina
04/05.06.05 ....Venezuela-Uruguay
07/08.06.05 ....Argentina-Brazil
07/08.06.05 ....Chile-Venezuela
07/08.06.05 ....Colombia-Ecuador
07/08.06.05 ....Paraguay-Bolivia
07/08.06.05 ....Peru-Uruguay
03/04.09.05 ....Bolivia-Ecuador
03/04.09.05 ....Brazil-Chile
03/04.09.05 ....Paraguay-Argentina
03/04.09.05 ....Uruguay-Colombia
03/04.09.05 ....Venezuela-Peru
08/09.10.05 ....Argentina-Peru
08/09.10.05 ....Bolivia-Brazil
08/09.10.05 ....Colombia-Chile
08/09.10.05 ....Ecuador-Uruguay
08/09.10.05 ....Venezuela-Paraguay
11/12.10.05 ....Brazil-Venezuela
11/12.10.05 ....Chile-Ecuador
11/12.10.05 ....Paraguay-Colombia
11/12.10.05 ....Peru-Bolivia
11/12.10.05 ....Uruguay-Argentina

Top four in section qualify for finals; fifth-placed side enter a play-off against Oceania section winners for a place in finals

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd rnd, 2nd legs

March 9

Chelsea (Eng) 0
Stuttgart (Ger) 0
Att: 36,657. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Chelsea 1-0 on agg
Chelsea: Cudicini - Johnson (Desailly 30), Gallas, Terry, Bridge, Gronkjaer, Makelele, Lampard, Parker (Geremi 61), Duff (Mutu 82), Crespo.
Stuttgart: Hildebrand - Hinkel (Gomez 81), Zivkovic, Bordon, Lahm, Meissner (Tiffert 64), Soldo, Fernando Meira, Hleb, Cacau (Szabics 40), Kuranyi.

Juventus (Ita) 0
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 1 (Pandiani 12)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,680. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Deportivo 2-0 on agg
Juventus: Buffon - Ferrara, Thuram, Montero, Legrottaglie (Pessotto 46), Camoranesi (Chiumiento 70), Tacchinardi, Appiah, Nedved, Del Piero (Miccoli 9), Di Vaio.
Deportivo: Molina - Scaloni, Jorge Andrade, Naybet, Capdevila, Mauro Silva, Sergio, Victor, Valeron (Duscher 77), Luque (Fran 62), Pandiani (Diego Tristan 82).

Lyon (Fra) 1 (Juninho 77)
Real Sociedad (Spa) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 38,914. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Lyon 2-0 on agg
Lyon: Coupet (Vercoutre 15) - Deflandre, Mulier, Edmilson, Dhorasoo (Berthod 88), Malouda, Diarra, Essien, Juninho, Luyindula (Elber 82), Govou.
Sociedad: Alberto - Potillon, Schurrer (De Paula 84), Lopez Rekarte, Alkiza, Jauregi, Karpin, Aranburu (Nihat 60), Gabilondo (De Pedro 60), Xabi Alonso, Kovacevic.

Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Scholes 32)
FC Porto (Por) 1 (Costinha 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 67,029. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Porto 3-2 on agg

Man Utd: Howard - P Neville, Brown, G Neville, O'Shea, Djemba Djemba (Saha 46), Butt, Fletcher (Cristiano Ronaldo 74; Solskjaer 82), Scholes, Giggs, Van Nistelrooy.
Porto: Vitor Baia - Paulo Ferreira, Jorge Costa (Pedro Emanuel 36), Ricardo Carvalho, Nuno Valente, Costinha, Alenichev (Ricardo Fernandes 80), Maniche, Deco, McCarthy, Carlos Alberto (Jankauskas 61).

March 10

Arsenal (Eng) 2 (Henry 14, 34)
Celta Vigo (Spa) 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,402. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Arsenal 5-2 on agg
Arsenal: Lehmann - Lauren, Toure, Campbell, Cole, Ljungberg, Vieira, Edu (Gilberto Silva 71), Pires (Reyes 71), Bergkamp (Kanu 77), Henry.
Celta: Cavallero - Velasco, Caceres, Sergio, Silvinho (Contreras 21), Oubina, Luccin (Jesuli 29), Jose Ignacio, Lopez (Vagner 71), Mostovoi, Pinilla.
Sent off: Contreras 73min.

Milan (Ita) 4 (Inzaghi 45, Shevchenko 69, 82, Gattuso 88)
Sparta Prague (Cze) 1 (Jun 59)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Milan 4-1 on agg
Milan: Dida - Cafu (Costacurta 88), Nesta, Maldini, Pancaro, Gattuso, Pirlo, Ambrosini, Kaka, Shevchenko (Rui Costa 86), Inzaghi (Tomasson 76).
Sparta: Blazek - Pergl, Hubschman, Johana, Labant, Poborsky, Sivok, Kovac, Michalik (V Gluscevic 71), Zelenka (Jun 57), Stajner (Poledica 88).

Monaco (Fra) 1 (Prso 60)
Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Cortez Batista (Por)
Agg 2-2. Monaco on away goals
Monaco: Roma - Rodriguez, Ibarra, Evra, Givet, Rothen, Bernardi, Zikos, Prso (Plasil 90), Morientes, Adebayor (Cisse 76).
Lokomotiv: Ovchinnikov - Pachinin, Maminov, Loskov, Obiorah, Evseev, Asatiani, Izmailov, Nizhegorodov, Sennikov (Gurenko 66), Ashvetia (Parks 67). *Sent off: Loskov 22min.*

Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Zidane 32)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Real Madrid 2-1 on agg
Real Madrid: Casillas - Michel Salgado, Mejia, Ivan Helguera, Raul Bravo, Beckham, Guti (Borja 90), Figo, Zidane, Solari (Cambiasso 90), Raul.
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol (Salihamidzic 66), Kuffour, Kovac, Lizarazu, Hargreaves (Schweinsteiger 46), Ballack, Demichelis, Ze Roberto, Pizarro (Santa Cruz 68), Makaay.

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

March 23

Milan 4 (Kaka 45, 50, Shevchenko 46, Pirlo 53)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Pandiani 11)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 60,335. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Milan: Dida - Cafu, Costacurta, Maldini, Pancaro (Serginho 73), Gattuso, Pirlo, Seedorf, Kaka, Shevchenko (Tomasson 85), Inzaghi (Ambrosini 80).
Deportivo: Molina - Scaloni, Jorge Andrade, Naybet, Capdevila, Mauro Silva, Duscher (Fran 66), Sergio (Manuel Pablo 82), Valeron, Luque (Diego Tristan 84), Pandiani.

FC Porto 2 (Deco 44, Ricardo Carvalho 71)
Lyon 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 46,910. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Porto: Vitor Baia - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Pedro Emanuel, Nuno Valente, Alenichev (Ricardo Fernandes 81), Costinha (Bosingwa 77), Maniche, Deco, Carlos Alberto (Jankauskas 57), McCarthy.
Lyon: Coupet - Deflandre (Reveillere 73), Edmilson, Muller, Malouda, Essien, Diarra, Juninho (Dhorasoo 46), Govou, Elber, Luyindula.

March 24

Chelsea 1 (Gudjohnsen 53)
Arsenal 1 (Pires 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,778. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Chelsea: Ambrosio - Gallas, Terry, Desailly, Bridge, Parker (J Cole 72), Lampard, Makelele, Duff, Gudjohnsen (Melchiot 86), Mutu (Crespo 72).
Sent off: Desailly 83min.

Arsenal: Lehmann - Lauren, Campbell, Toure, Cole, Ljungberg (Reyes 78), Vieira, Edu, Pires, Bergkamp (Gilberto Silva 72), Henry.

Real Madrid 4 (Ivan Helguera 51, Zidane 69, Figo 76, Ronaldo 81)
Monaco 2 (Squillaci 43, Morientes 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 68,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Michel Salgado, Mejia, Ivan Helguera, Raul Bravo (Pavon 28), Beckham, Guti (Borja 78), Figo, Raul, Zidane, Ronaldo (Solari 82).
Monaco: Roma - Givet (Ibarra 84), Rodriguez, Squillaci, Evra (El Fakiri 89), Cisse (Plasil 66), Zikos, Bernardi, Rothen, Giuly, Morientes.

UEFA CUP

4th rnd, 1st legs

March 11

Auxerre (Fra) 1 (Tainio 36)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1 (Lucius 71)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)

Benfica (Por) 0
Internazionale (Ita) 0
Ref: Wegereef (Hol)

Bordeaux (Fra) 3 (Celades 60, 71, Riera 87)
Club Brugge (Blg) 1 (Verheyen 58)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bennett (Eng)

Celtic (Sco) 1 (Thompson 59)
Barcelona (Spa) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Sent off: Douglas (Celtic) 45min; Motta 45min, Saviola 49min (both Barcelona)

Genclerbirligi (Tur) 1 (Daems pen 12)
Valencia (Spa) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)

Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Baros 55)
Marseille (Fra) 1 (Drogba 79)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)

Newcastle (Eng) 4 (Bellamy 67, Shearer 71, Robert 74, Bramble 84)
Mallorca (Spa) 1 (Correa 58)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Sent off: Edu Moya (Mallorca) 83min

Villarreal (Spa) 2 (Anderson 29, Jose Mari 35)
Roma (Ita) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)

4th rnd, 2nd legs

March 25

Barcelona 0
Celtic 0
Ref: Messina (Ita)
Celtic 1-0 on agg

Club Brugge 0
Bordeaux 1 (Chamakh 84)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** De Santis (Ita)
Bordeaux 4-1 on agg

Internazionale 4 (Martins 45, 70, Recoba 60, Vieri 64)
Benfica 3 (Nuno Gomes 36, 67, Tiago 77)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Inter 4-3 on agg

Mallorca 0
Newcastle 3 (Shearer 46, 89, Bellamy 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Newcastle 7-1 on agg

Marseille 2 (Drogba pen 38, Meite 58)
Liverpool 1 (Heskey 15)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Sent off: Biscan (Liverpool) 36min
Marseille 3-2 on agg

PSV Eindhoven 3 (Kezman 4, 27, Van Bommel 73)
Auxerre 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
PSV 4-1 on agg

Roma 2 (Emerson 10, Cassano 50)
Villarreal 1 (Anderson 66)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Sent off: Zebina (Roma) 88min
Villarreal 3-2 on agg

Valencia 2 (Mista 63, Vicente 94 - silver goal)
Genclerbirligi 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-0. **Ref:** Temmink (Hol)
Sent off: Mustafa Ozkan (Genclerbirligi) 86min
Valencia 2-1 on agg

AUSTRIA

Mar 6: Karnten 3 Bregenz 2.
Mar 7: Pasching 2 Admira 1; Salzburg 1 Grazer AK 2; Sturm Graz 4 Mattersburg 0; Austria Wien 1 Rapid Wien 1.
Mar 13: Bregenz 0 Austria Wien 1; Mattersburg 2 Karnten 0; Admira 3 Salzburg 2; Rapid Wien 0 Pasching 0.
Mar 14: Grazer AK 1 Sturm Graz 1.
Mar 17: Admira 1 Rapid 0; Austria Wien 1 Mattersburg 0; Pasching 3 Grazer AK 3; Salzburg 2 Bregenz 0; Sturm Graz 2 Karnten 0.
Mar 20: Bregenz 2 Sturm Graz 1; Grazer AK 2 Admira 1; Mattersburg 0 Pasching 0; Rapid Wien 2 Salzburg 0.
Mar 21: Karnten 2 Austria Wien 0.
Mar 27: Admira 0 Bregenz 0; Austria Wien 5 Sturm Graz 1; Pasching 1 Karnten 1; Salzburg 1 Mattersburg 0.
Mar 28: Grazer AK 2 Rapid Wien 1.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria Wien	27	15	7	5	45	20	52
Grazer AK	27	15	7	5	46	28	52
Rapid Wien	26	12	8	6	40	31	44
Pasching	27	12	8	7	42	35	44
Bregenz	27	10	7	10	36	41	37
Admira	27	9	7	11	32	34	34
Salzburg	27	8	3	16	33	33	27
Sturm Graz	27	6	9	12	29	37	27
Mattersburg	27	6	9	12	25	42	27
Karnten	26	5	7	14	22	49	22

BELGIUM

Friday, March 5

Heusden-Zolder 0
Westerlo 1 (Ntuka Pule 80) Att: 5,317

Saturday, March 6

Charleroi 0
Beveren 1 (Romaric 25) Att: 6,747

Lierse 0
Cercle Brugge 0 Att: 6,000

Lokeren 2 (Tailson 30, Renatinho 72)
Genk 1 (Kpaka 87) Att: 6,500

Mons 1 (Wamberto pen 18)
La Louviere 0 Att: 5,500

Mouscron 2 (Mpenza 66, De Vleeschauwer 74)
Gent 1 (Ndikumana 69) Att: 9,218

Sunday, March 7

Club Brugge 1 (Lange 3)
Anderlecht 0 Att: 27,900

Germinal Beerschot 0
St Truiden 0 Att: 6,000

Standard 3 (Mpenza 23, 59, Bangoura 58)
Royal Antwerp 0 Att: 14,000

Friday, March 12

Heusden-Zolder 2 (De Conde 10, Suzuki 37)
Lokeren 3 (Bance 55, Kristinsson 70, Tailson 75) Att: 5,444

Saturday, March 13

Anderlecht 3 (Iachtchouk 63, 69, Jestrovic 89)
Charleroi 2 (Defays 12, Olufade 29) Att: 23,777

Beveren 0
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 5,000

La Louviere 0
Lierse 1 (Delorge 80) Att: 3,500

Royal Antwerp 0
Mons 0 Att: 5,000

St Truiden 1 (Buvens 86)
Mouscron 1 (Pieroni 7) Att: 7,000

Sunday, March 14

Cercle Brugge 0
Genk 0 Att: 5,400

Gent 0
Standard 0 Att: 9,960

Westerlo 2 (Dosunmu 68, Brogno 90)
Club Brugge 3 (Smolders 2, Saeternes 38, 59) Att: 9,500

Saturday, March 20

Charleroi 3 (Olufade 24, Dufer 60, Chabaud 89)
Westerlo 1 (Paas 73) Att: 8,176

Club Brugge 3 (Verheyen 10, Saeternes 30, Smolders 82)
Heusden-Zolder 0 Att: 22,471

Genk 1 (Chatelle 54)
La Louviere 1 (Mamouni pen 65) Att: 23,311

Germinal Beerschot 1 (Snelders 82)
Anderlecht 0 Att: 9,800

Mons 0
Gent 1 (Van Hoyweghen 55) Att: 3,500

Standard 1 (Mpenza 36)
St Truiden 1 (Caers 89) Att: 21,000

Sunday, March 21

Lierse 1 (Schaessens 57)
Royal Antwerp 0 Att: 7,500

Lokeren 0
Cercle Brugge 2 (De Wulf 13, Stassin 89) Att: 4,500

Mouscron 5 (Pieroni 6, 24, pen 45, 85, Zewlakow 90)
Beveren 0 Att: 6,542

Tuesday, March 23

Anderlecht 6 (Baseggio 17, Dindane 19, 56, 63, Kolar 26, Iachtchouk 55)
Heusden-Zolder 0 Att: 23,000

Wednesday, March 24

Royal Antwerp 3 (Johnson 14, 31, Goots 90)
Mouscron 1 (Pieroni 51) Att: 6,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	27	22	2	3	66	22	68
Club Brugge	27	17	4	6	58	27	55
Standard	27	14	9	4	54	24	51
Mouscron	27	13	10	4	55	34	49
Genk	27	12	8	7	47	33	44
Westerlo	27	12	8	7	41	34	44
Germinal B	27	9	11	7	23	25	38
St Truiden	27	8	10	9	30	37	34
Beveren	27	10	3	14	35	46	33
Gent	27	7	11	9	25	27	32
La Louviere	27	6	12	9	32	37	30
Lierse	27	6	12	9	24	32	30
Cercle Brugge	27	6	11	10	22	42	29
Mons	27	6	10	11	24	33	28
Lokeren	27	7	7	13	34	47	28
Charleroi	27	6	7	14	28	37	25
Royal Antwerp	27	5	5	17	20	51	20
Heusden-Zolder	27	4	6	17	24	54	18

LEADING GOALSCORERS
23 Luigi Pieroni (Mouscron)
15 Emile Mpenza (Standard)
14 Andres Mendoza (Club Brugge)

BELGIAN CUP – semi-finals

1st legs
Mar 17: Anderlecht 1 Beveren 1; Mouscron 2 Club Brugge 2.

2nd legs
Mar 26: Beveren 0 Anderlecht 0 *Agg 1-1. Beveren on away goals.*
Mar 28: Club Brugge 1 Mouscron 0 *Brugge 3-2 on agg.*

BULGARIA

Mar 5: Botev 0 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.
Mar 6: Makedonska 0 CSKA 2; Lokomotiv Sofia 1 Rodopa 0; Vidima-Rakovski 0 Belasitsa 0; Chernomorets 0 Cherno More 3; Marek 1 Slavia 2.
Mar 7: Levski 1 Lovech 1; Spartak Varna 2 Naftex 0.
Mar 11: Levski 3 Lokomotiv Sofia 0.
Mar 13: Lovech 1 Makedonska 0; Slavia 4 Spartak Varna 0; Naftex 6 Botev 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 6 Chernomorets 0; Cherno More 4 Vidima-Rakovski 1; CSKA 4 Marek 0.
Mar 14: Belasitsa 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Rodopa 2 Levski 1.
Mar 19: Spartak Varna 0 CSKA 0.
Mar 20: Lokomotiv Sofia 3 Cherno More 2; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 4; Botev 2 Slavia 1; Marek 3 Makedonska 0; Levski 4 Belasitsa 2.
Mar 21: Rodopa 1 Lovech 2; Chernomorets 0 Naftex 2.
Mar 26: Lokomotiv Plovdiv 3 Lokomotiv Sofia 1.
Mar 27: Lovech 2 Marek 0; Makedonska 1 Spartak Varna 0; Slavia 3 Chernomorets 1; Naftex 0 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Belasitsa 3 Rodopa 0; CSKA 4 Botev 1.
Mar 28: Cherno More 0 Levski 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lok Plovdiv	22	18	2	2	53	14	56
Lovech	22	15	6	1	31	11	51
CSKA	22	15	4	3	48	18	49
Levski	22	14	6	2	41	14	48
Slavia	22	15	1	6	46	22	46
Naftex	22	8	6	8	41	25	30
Cherno More	22	8	6	8	34	34	30
Belasitsa	22	8	2	12	26	37	26
Lok Sofia	22	6	7	9	28	36	25
Marek	22	8	0	14	25	45	24
Spartak Varna	22	6	4	12	22	32	22
Rodopa	22	6	3	13	20	37	21
Vidima-Rakovski	22	4	8	10	21	37	20
Chernomorets	22	4	5	13	19	43	17
Makedonska	22	5	1	16	19	39	16
Botev	22	4	3	15	23	53	15

CROATIA

Regular season

Mar 6: Osijek 2 Hajduk 3; Varteks 1 Cibalia 0; Zadar 2 Slaven 0; Rijeka 1 Zagreb 0; Marsonia 0 Kamen Ingrad 2; Dinamo 1 Inter* 0.
Mar 13: Varteks 3 Zadar 2; Cibalia 0 Dinamo 1; Kamen Ingrad 0 Rijeka 1; Inter 1 Marsonia 1; Zagreb 0 Osijek 0; Hajduk 2 Slaven 1.
Mar 20: Zadar 1 Hajduk 3; Slaven 1 Zagreb 0; Osijek 3 Kamen Ingrad 2; Rijeka 0 Inter 1; Marsonia 1 Cibalia 3; Dinamo 3 Varteks 0.
**Formerly Inker*

CROATIA – REGULAR SEASON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	22	18	1	3	46	18	55
Dinamo	22	15	5	2	47	16	50
Rijeka	22	8	7	7	26	25	31
Osijek	22	8	5	9	36	40	29
Varteks	22	7	8	7	21	25	29
Zadar	22	7	7	8	37	44	28
Kamen Ingrad	22	8	4	10	32	27	28
Inter	22	6	9	7	22	23	27
Slaven	22	6	8	8	22	27	26
Cibalia	22	5	5	12	25	35	20
Zagreb	22	3	10	9	21	32	19
Marsonia	22	4	5	13	25	48	17

Top six went into championship play-offs; bottom six into relegation play-offs. Full regular season record carried forward

Championship play-offs

Mar 27: Rijeka 2 Osijek 1; Hajduk 5 Zadar 1; Dinamo 4 Varteks 1.

CROATIA – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	23	19	1	3	51	19	58
Dinamo	23	16	5	2	51	17	53
Rijeka	23	9	7	7	28	26	34
Osijek	23	8	5	10	37	42	29
Varteks	23	7	8	8	22	29	29
Zadar	23	7	7	9	38	49	28

CZECH REPUBLIC

Mar 3: Ostrava 6 Synot 2.
Mar 6: Sparta 0 Olomouc 0; Zlin 2 Synot 0.
Mar 7: Pribram 2 Opava 2; Teplice 2 Ceske Budejovice 0; Brno 2 Liberec 0; Jablonec 0 Slavia 0.
Mar 8: Ostrava 0 Zizkov 0.
Mar 13: Opava 1 Olomouc 2; Synot 2 Teplice 0; Ceske Budejovice 0 Pribram 0.
Mar 14: Chmel Blsany 2 Brno 1; Liberec 0 Jablonec 0; Slavia 0 Sparta 2; Zizkov 3 Zlin 0.
Mar 15: Plzen 1 Ostrava 2.
Mar 20: Zlin 0 Opava 0; Ostrava 0 Slavia 2.
Mar 21: Olomouc 1 Ceske Budejovice 0; Pribram 1 Synot 0; Jablonec 1 Zizkov 1; Teplice 2 Chmel Blsany 2; Brno 4 Plzen 0.
Mar 22: Sparta 0 Liberec 0.
Mar 24: Opava 0 Teplice 0; Plzen 2 Chmel Blsany 1.
Mar 27: Slavia 3 Pribram 0; Ostrava 5 Brno 1; Synot 2 Sparta 0.
Mar 28: Ceske Budejovice 4 Opava 1; Chmel Blsany 1 Zlin 0; Plzen 1 Jablonec 1; Zizkov 0 Olomouc 1.
Mar 29: Liberec 1 Teplice 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ostrava	23	14	7	2	49	20	49
Slavia	23	13	4	6	32	13	43
Olomouc	23	12	6	5	34	17	42
Sparta	23	10	9	4	35	19	39
Synot	23	10	5	8	31	30	35
Liberec	23	8	9	6	22	17	33
Ceske Budejovice	23	9	6	8	29	26	33
Zlin	23	9	4	10	22	28	31
Teplice	23	6	10	7	22	24	28
Brno	23	7	7	9	27	32	28
Pribram	23	7	6	10	25	26	27
Jablonec	23	4	13	6	18	25	25
Opava	23	6	5	12	26	44	23
Chmel Blsany	23	6	4	13	25	44	22
Zizkov	23	5	6	12	14	25	21
Plzen	23	4	7	12	17	38	19

DENMARK

Mar 13: Frem 1 FC Copenhagen 2.
Mar 14: Brondby 1 Esbjerg 6; AB 1 Herfolge 2; OB 4 Midtjylland 0; Viborg 0 Nordsjaelland 0; AGF 0 AaB 1.
Mar 20: OB 1 Brondby 0.
Mar 21: AaB 2 Viborg 0; Esbjerg 3 AGF 3; Nordsjaelland 1 AB 0; Herfolge 0 Frem 1; FC Copenhagen 2 Midtjylland 1.
Mar 27: Midtjylland 6 AB 0.
Mar 28: AaB 1 Esbjerg 1; Nordsjaelland 0 Brondby 0; Herfolge 1 AGF 0; FC Copenhagen 0 Viborg 1; Frem 1 OB 3.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esbjerg	23	14	6	3	49	26	48
Brondby	23	14	5	4	36	21	47
FC Copenhagen	23	13	6	4	35	19	45
OB	23	13	5	5	49	31	44
AaB	23	10	7	6	34	28	37
Midtjylland	23	8	5	10	42	37	29
Viborg	23	7	7	9	32	31	28
AGF	23	8	3	12	34	46	27
Herfolge	23	7	5	11	24	30	26
Nordsjaelland	23	5	8	10	26	38	23
Frem	23	5	3	15	25	44	18
AB	23	3	2	18	18	53	11

ENGLAND

Saturday, March 6

Birmingham 2 (Forssell 24, Hughes 69)
Bolton 0 Att: 28,003

Tuesday, March 9

Middlesbrough 1 (Nemeth 73)
Tottenham 0 Att: 31,789

Saturday, March 13

Birmingham 0
Leicester 1 (Ferdinand 54) Att: 29,491

Blackburn 0
Arsenal 2 (Henry 57, Pires 87) Att: 28,267

Bolton 0
Chelsea 2 (Terry 71, Duff 74) Att: 26,717

Charlton 1 (Holland 25)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 26,270

Everton 1 (Rooney 78)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 40,105

Fulham 2 (Davis 71, Boa Morte 83)
Leeds 0 Att: 17,104

Sunday, March 14

Manchester City 4 (Fowler 3, Macken 33, Sinclair 73, Wright-Phillips 90)
Manchester Utd 1 (Scholes 35) Att: 47,284

Southampton 2 (Beattie 51, Phillips 85)
Liverpool 0 Att: 32,056

Tottenham 1 (O'Brien og 86)
Newcastle 0 Att: 36,083

Wolverhampton 0
Aston Villa 4 (Hitzlsperger 7, Mellberg 18, Angel 25, 59) Att: 29,386

Wednesday, March 17

Liverpool 3 (Hamann 6, Owen 28, 58)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 34,663

Saturday, March 20

Arsenal 2 (Pires 16, Bergkamp 24)
Bolton 1 (Ivan Campo 40) Att: 38,053

Aston Villa 0
Blackburn 2 (Flitcroft 26, Stead 36) Att: 37,532

Chelsea 2 (Gudjohnsen 7, Duff 30)
Fulham 1 (Pembridge 19) Att: 41,169

Leicester 1 (Bent 90)
Everton 1 (Rooney 75) Att: 31,650

Liverpool 1 (Hyypia 90)
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 43,795

Manchester Utd 3 (Giggs 30, Cristiano Ronaldo 89, Bellion 90)
Tottenham 0 Att: 67,634

Middlesbrough 5 (Mendieta 5, Maccarone 21, 45, Southgate 30, Nemeth 90)
Birmingham 3 (Forssell 23, 60, Morrison 44) Att: 30,244

Newcastle 3 (Shearer 1, 77, Jenas 35)
Charlton 1 (Jensen 54) Att: 51,847

Sunday, March 21

Portsmouth 1 (Aiyegbeni 68)
Southampton 0 Att: 20,140

Monday, March 22

Leeds 2 (McPhail 23, Viduka pen 76)
Manchester City 1 (Anelka 44) Att: 36,998

Saturday, March 27

Birmingham 4 (Hughes 12, 67, Forssell 69, pen 82)
Leeds 1 (Viduka 3) Att: 29,069

Blackburn 1 (Tugay 37)
Portsmouth 2 (Sheringham 17, Aiyegbeni 82) Att: 22,855

Charlton 1 (Cole 8)
Aston Villa 2 (Vassell 24, Samuel 54) Att: 26,250

Chelsea 5 (Melchiot 4, Lampard 70, Hasselbaink 79, 87, 90)
Wolverhampton 2 (Camara 23, Craddock 57) Att: 41,215

Everton 1 (Radzinski 78)
Middlesbrough 1 (Job 83) Att: 38,210

Manchester City 0
Fulham 0 Att: 46,522

Southampton 1 (Delap 64)
Tottenham 0 Att: 31,973

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 28.03.04

pos	name	team	goals	factor	pts
1	Ailton	Werder Bremen (Ger)	24	2	48
	Ronaldo	Real Madrid (Spa)	24	2	48
3	Ara Hakopyan	Banants (Arm)	45	1	45
4	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	22	2	44
5	Djibril Cisse	Auxerre (Fra)	20	2	40
	Andrii Shevchenko	Milan (Ita)	20	2	40
7	Tor Henning Hamre	Flora Tallinn (Est)	39	1	39
	Henrik Larsson	Celtic (Sco)	26	1.5	39
9	Roy Makaay	Bayern Munich (Ger)	19	2	38
	Alan Shearer	Newcastle (Eng)	19	2	38
11	Viktors Dobrecovs	Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)	36	1	36
	Didier Drogba	Marseille (Fra)	18	2	36
	Louis Saha	Manchester Utd (Eng)	18	2	36
	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	Manchester Utd (Eng)	18	2	36
15	Luigi Pieroni	Mouscron (Blg)	23	1.5	34.5
16	Mista	Valencia (Spa)	17	2	34
	Salva	Malaga (Spa)	17	2	34

For the latest standings, updated weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

Sunday, March 28

Arsenal 1 (Henry 49)
Manchester Utd 1 (Saha 86) Att: 38,184

Bolton 1 (Pedersen 4)
Newcastle 0 Att: 27,360

Leicester 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 32,013

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	30	22	8	0	58	20	74
Chelsea	30	21	4	5	57	24	67
Man Utd	30	19	5	6	56	30	62
Liverpool	30	12	10	8	42	31	46
Newcastle	30	11	12	7	41	31	45
Birmingham	30	12	9	9	37	36	45
Aston Villa	30	12	7	11	38	35	43
Charlton	30	12	7	11	41	39	43
Fulham	30	11	7	12	42	40	40
Southampton	30	10	9	11	30	28	39
Middlesbrough	30	10	8	12	35	39	38
Tottenham	30	11	4	15	40	47	37
Bolton	30	9	10	11	34	46	37
Everton	30	8	10	12	36	41	34
Man City	30	7	10	13	41	42	31
Blackburn	30	8	7	15	42	48	31
Portsmouth	30	8	6	16	32	45	30
Leicester	30	5	13	12	39	52	28
Leeds	30	6	7	17	29	60	25
Wolverhampton	30	5	9	16	26	62	24

LEADING GOALSCORERS
22 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
19 Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
18 Louis Saha (Fulham/Manchester Utd)
18 Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Manchester Utd)
16 Mikael Forssell (Birmingham)

FA CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 6: Manchester Utd 2 Fulham 1; Portsmouth 1 Arsenal 5.
Mar 7: Millwall 0 Tranmere 0; Sunderland 1 Sheffield Utd 0.

Quarter-final replay
Mar 16: Tranmere 1 Millwall 2.

FRANCE

Friday, March 5

Lyon 4 (Terrier og 43, Rodrigo og 48, Elber 51, Luyindula 75)
Ajaccio 0 Att: 35,829

Monaco 3 (Morientes 25, 38, Prso pen 28)
Guingamp 1 (Dagano 20) Att: 4,000

Saturday, March 6

Bordeaux 2 (Celades 28, Beda 59)
Le Mans 0 Att: 21,026

Lille 1 (Moussilou 53)
Auxerre 0 Att: 14,198

Metz 0
Lens 2 (Utaka 27, Diop pen 65) Att: 15,631

Montpellier 0
Toulouse 1 (Emana 15) Att: 8,624

Paris SG 1 (Pauleta pen 49)
Sochaux 1 (Santos 55) Att: 41,544

Rennes 0
Nantes 3 (Moldovan 50, 74, Barbosa og 53) Att: 18,566

Strasbourg 2 (Le Pen pen 60, 63)
Nice 2 (Pitau 33, 38) Att: 11,527

Sunday, March 7

Bastia 4 (Maurice 22, Diarra 28, Ben Saada 48, Ogbeche 56)
Marseille 1 (Drogba pen 78) Att: 10,000

Saturday, March 13

Ajaccio 0
Lille 3 (Chalme 45, 62, 68) Att: 4,000

Guingamp 4 (Leroy 45, 61, 79, Tchomogo 56)
Montpellier 3 (Moullec 31, Bamogo pen 45, Lafourcade 88) Att: 13,718

Le Mans 0
Paris SG 1 (Ljuboja 67) Att: 15,000

Lens 0
Bastia 0 Att: 33,421

Nantes 2 (Moldovan 14, Armand 39)
Metz 2 (Meniri 50, Maoulida 75) Att: 27,389

Nice 3 (Meslin 43, Laslandes 50, Everson 90)
Rennes 1 (Piquionne 55) Att: 11,243

Sochaux 1 (Santos 28)
Lyon 2 (Elber 3, Edmilson 65) Att: 19,495

Sunday, March 14

Auxerre 0
Monaco 0 Att: 20,000

Marseille 3 (Drogba pen 22, Marlet 39, Ferreira 47)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 50,000

Toulouse 1 (Avezac 75)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 20,000

Friday, March 19

Toulouse 0
Guingamp 0 Att: 19,213

Saturday, March 20

Bastia 0
Le Mans 0 Att: 5,565

Bordeaux 1 (Jemmali 40)
Nice 1 (Laslandes 11) Att: 22,435

Lille 1 (Moussilou 31)
Lens 1 (Coridon 7) Att: 20,280

Lyon 1 (Elber 26)
Nantes 0 Att: 35,643

Metz 1 (Meniri 18)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 15,985

Monaco 1 (Morientes pen 57)
Sochaux 1 (Mathieu 90) Att: 8,000

Montpellier 1 (Mezague pen 47)
Auxerre 0 Att: 13,179

Paris SG 1 (Pauleta pen 68)
Ajaccio 0 Att: 38,580

Sunday, March 21

Rennes 4 (Frei 35, 38, 60, 74)
Marseille 3 (Batlles 32, Drogba 45, Hossam 72) Att: 22,000

Saturday, March 27

Ajaccio 1 (Diomede 23)
Bastia 0 Att: 6,500

Guingamp 2 (Camara 12, 34)
Lille 1 (Bodmer 25) Att: 14,240

Le Mans 0
Monaco 1 (Prso 49) Att: 14,440

Nantes 3 (Moldovan 29, 50, 90)
Montpellier 2 (Delhommeau og 3, Moullec 59) Att: 28,510

Nice 0
Lyon 1 (Elber 16) Att: 12,784

Sochaux 2 (Beria og 52, Pagis 90)
Metz 0 Att: 14,373

Strasbourg 0
Rennes 3 (Frei 61, 63, Monterrubio 83) Att: 14,937

Sunday, March 28

Auxerre 3 (Akale 16, Cisse 44, 66)
Toulouse 2 (Faure 10, Eduardo 83) Att: 15,000

Lens 1 (Coridon 32)
Paris SG 0 Att: 35,000

Marseille 1 (Meriem 52)
Bordeaux 1 (Francia 9) Att: 55,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	30	19	6	5	52	21	63
Monaco	30	18	9	3	49	20	63
Paris SG	30	16	9	5	40	21	57
Sochaux	30	15	8	7	44	32	53
Auxerre	30	15	5	10	46	25	50
Marseille	30	14	5	11	42	35	47
Nantes	30	13	7	10	37	28	46
Lens	30	13	6	11	27	39	45
Nice	30	10	14	6	33	27	44
Bordeaux	30	11	9	10	29	30	42
Lille	30	11	8	11	34	31	41
Rennes	30	10	9	11	41	37	39
Bastia	30	8	10	12	30	37	34
Strasbourg	30	8	8	14	39	47	32
Guingamp	29	9	4	16	28	45	31
Ajaccio	30	8	6	16	24	45	30
Toulouse	30	7	8	15	23	37	29
Metz	29	7	7	15	20	33	28
Montpellier	30	7	4	19	35	59	25
Le Mans	30	4	10	16	20	44	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS
20 Djibril Cisse (Auxerre)
17 Didier Drogba (Marseille)
15 Pierre-Alain Frau (Sochaux)
14 Alexander Frei (Rennes)
13 Pauleta (Paris SG)

FRENCH CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 16: Amiens 0 Dijon 1; Brive 1 Paris SG 2.
Mar 17: Monaco 0 Chateauroux 1; Nantes 3 Rennes 2.

GERMANY

Saturday, March 6

Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Schneider 90)
Bayern Munich 3 (Makaay 40, 77, Ballack 58) Att: 22,500

Borussia Dortmund 0
Stuttgart 2 (Hleb 6, Heldt pen 82) Att: 83,000

Hansa Rostock 3 (Melkam 5, Arvidsson 19, Di Salvo 79)
Hamburg 0 Att: 26,000

Hertha 1 (Marcelinho 20)
Bochum 1 (Fahrenhorst 57) Att: 35,000

Kaiserslautern 1 (Malz 90)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 40,592

Monchengladbach 1 (Demo 25)
Hannover 0 Att: 29,300

Schalke 3 (Sand 43, 52, Glieder 62)
Freiburg 0 Att: 61,266

Sunday, March 7

1860 Munich 0
Werder Bremen 2 (Klasnic 37, Haristeas 79) Att: 25,000

Wolfsburg 2 (Klimowicz 30, Topic 84)
Koln 0 Att: 15,000

Saturday, March 13

Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Berbatov 1, Babic 13, Schneider 32, Franca 63)
Wolfsburg 2 (Topic 21, Klimowicz 81) Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 3 (Jeremies 3, Makaay 9, pen 76)
Hansa Rostock 3 (Max 53, Arvidsson 65, Rasmussen 71) Att: 41,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 3 (Amanatidis 57, Skela 76, Schur 80)
Schalke 0 Att: 35,255

Freiburg 2 (Antar 16, Tskitishvili pen 67)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Dede 45, Hermel og 59) Att: 25,000

Hamburg 2 (Rahn 33, Romeo 71)
Hertha 0 Att: 44,181

Hannover 0
Kaiserslautern 1 (Hristov 63) Att: 21,135

Werder Bremen 3 (Micoud 16, Ailton 37, 43)
Koln 2 (Schroder 57, Lottner 70) Att: 41,000

Sunday, March 14

Bochum 1 (Asanin og 88)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 32,645

Stuttgart 2 (Soldo 32, Streller 35)
1860 Munich 0 Att: 41,000

Saturday, March 20

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Ewerthon 23, Koller 80)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Att: 80,500

Hansa Rostock 0
Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Berbatov 58, Babic 75) Att: 24,200

Hertha 1 (Marcelinho pen 42)
Bayern Munich 1 (Makaay 8) Att: 60,800

Kaiserslautern 2 (Lokvenc 55, 64)
Bochum 2 (Hashemian 16, Wosz 45) Att: 33,048

Koln 2 (Kringe 45, Feulner 71)
Stuttgart 2 (Meissner 28, Scherz og 72) Att: 50,000

Monchengladbach 3 (Strasser 61, Sverkos 79, Broich 82)
Hamburg 0 Att: 33,000

Schalke 2 (Mertesacker og 63, Sand 84)
Hannover 2 (Brdaric 14, 71) Att: 61,266

Sunday, March 21

1860 Munich 1 (Agostino 58)
Freiburg 1 (Coulibaly 10) Att: 19,500

Wolfsburg 0
Werder Bremen 2 (Klasnic 75, Micoud 85) Att: 30,000

Saturday, March 27

Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Berbatov 29, 72, Franca 34, 55)
Hertha 1 (Marcelinho 7) Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 5 (Kuffour 21, Santa Cruz 39, Makaay pen 48, Hargreaves 88, Ballack 90)
Monchengladbach 2 (Sverkos 54, 65) Att: 56,000

Bochum 1 (Meichelbeck 24)
Schalke 2 (Klasener 79, Delura 83) Att: 32,645

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
1860 Munich 3 (Gorlitz 1, Lehmann 16, Agostino 59) Att: 28,300

Freiburg 3 (Iashvili 15, Riether 76, Antar 81)
Koln 0 Att: 25,000

Hannover 1 (Christiansen 83)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Frings 13) Att: 27,504

Hansa Rostock 3 (Arvidsson 9, Max 34, Mohrle 37)
Wolfsburg 1 (Quattrocchi 26) Att: 19,800

Sunday, March 28

Hamburg 3 (Rahn 30, 70, Romeo 46)
Kaiserslautern 2 (Klose 53, Hristov 79) Att: 41,020

Stuttgart 4 (Bordon 3, 24, 50, Streller 69)
Werder Bremen 4 (Klasnic 13, 35, Ailton 43, 70) Att: 48,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Werder Bremen	26	19	5	2	65	27	62
Bayern Munich	26	15	8	3	59	29	53
Stuttgart	26	13	9	4	37	16	48
B Leverkusen	26	13	6	7	50	34	45
Bochum	26	11	9	6	41	29	42
Schalke	26	10	10	6	33	29	40
B Dortmund	26	11	6	9	41	35	39
Hamburg	26	10	6	10	36	43	36
Hansa Rostock	26	9	7	10	41	38	34
Freiburg	26	9	6	11	37	52	33
Wolfsburg	26	10	1	15	45	51	31
1860 Munich	26	8	6	12	28	38	30
Kaiserslautern*	26	9	4	13	29	40	28
M'gladbach	26	7	6	13	29	39	27
Eintracht F'furt	26	7	5	14	28	39	26
Hannover	26	6	8	12	41	55	26
Hertha	26	5	9	12	26	50	24
Koln	26	4	5	17	21	43	17

**3pts deducted for failing to supply accurate information when re-applying for professional licence*

LEADING GOALSCORERS

24 Ailton (Werder Bremen)
19 Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich)
16 Martin Max (Hansa Rostock)
12 Vahid Hashemian (Bochum)
12 Diego Klimowicz (Wolfsburg)

GERMAN CUP – semi-finals

Mar 16: Werder Bremen 3 Lubeck 2.
Mar 17: Alemannia Aachen 1 Monchengladbach 0.

GREECE

Mar 13: OFI 2 Akratitos 1; Aigaleo 4 Paniliakos 1.
Mar 14: Panionios 0 Panathinaikos 1; Xanthi 2 Proodeftiki 2; Halkidona 1 Iraklis 0; Aris 1 Ionikos 1; Kallithea 0 PAOK 1; Olympiakos 0 AEK 1.
Mar 20: Paniliakos 1 Xanthi 0; Akratitos 0 Kallithea 0.
Mar 21: Panionios 2 Aigaleo 0; Proodeftiki 2 OFI 0; Iraklis 6 Aris 0; PAOK 3 AEK 2; Panathinaikos 3 Halkidona 0; Ionikos 1 Olympiakos 2.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	24	19	4	1	48	13	61
Olympiakos	24	19	2	3	56	16	59
PAOK	24	16	5	3	41	19	53
Aigaleo	24	12	6	6	31	20	42
AEK	24	12	5	7	44	25	41
Halkidona	24	12	5	7	34	29	41
Panionios	24	9	9	6	31	22	36
Iraklis	24	10	5	9	34	32	35
Xanthi	24	7	6	11	24	33	27
OFI	24	7	5	12	24	38	26
Ionikos	24	6	5	13	26	34	23
Aris	24	5	5	14	18	38	20
Paniliakos	24	4	6	14	26	47	18
Proodeftiki	24	3	8	13	17	40	17
Kallithea	24	2	10	12	24	36	16
Akratitos	24	3	6	15	23	59	15

HOLLAND

Friday, March 5

NAC 0
Twente 1 (N'Kufo 5) Att: 11,303

Saturday, March 6

Den Haag 2 (Stroeve 11, Castelen 51)
AZ 3 (Van Galen 31, Wijker 86, Meerdink 90) Att: 9,490

NEC 1 (Zonneveld 45)
RBC 2 (Molenaar 56, Daelemans 61) Att: 12,250

RKC 0
Ajax 1 (Olfers og 39) Att: 7,500

Roda JC 1 (Redan 50)
Zwolle 1 (Van Dinteren 63) Att: 11,850

Willem II 2 (Denneboom 82, Hadouir 90)
Groningen 0 Att: 12,860

Sunday, March 7

Feyenoord 2 (Buffel 79, 82)
Heerenveen 2 (Selakovic pen 11, Knopper 67) Att: 46,300

Utrecht 0
PSV 4 (Bouma 43, Van Bommel 45, Park 86, Kezman 90) Att: 17,500

Volendam 0
Vitesse 0 Att: 5,450

Friday, March 12

Twente 2 (Ramzi 14, De Visscher 66)
NEC 5 (Wielaert 6, Wisgerhof 50, Tumba 52, De Freitas 87, Van Rijswijk 90) Att: 13,100

Saturday, March 13

Heerenveen 2 (Sibon 7, Hakansson 81)
Volendam 1 (Van Zaanen 71) Att: 15,000

NAC 3 (Boussaboun 18, Boukhari 23, Diba 61)
Zwolle 1 (Takak 25) Att: 11,704

RBC 1 (Youssouf 7)
Groningen 0 Att: 5,000

Sunday, March 14

Ajax 4 (Mitea 26, Anastasiou 36, 45, Pienaar 82)
Roda JC 2 (Redan 44, Luijpers 46) Att: 49,754

AZ 1 (Buskermolen 48)
Utrecht 2 (Van de Haar 58, Calabro 83) Att: 7,577

PSV 0
Feyenoord 1 (Smolarek 13) Att: 35,000

RKC 1 (Boutahar 59)
Willem II 1 (Mathijsen 65) Att: 6,450

Vitesse 1 (Knol pen 85)
Den Haag 0 Att: 18,990

Friday, March 19

Groningen 0
Heerenveen 0 Att: 12,409

Saturday, March 20

NEC 0
AZ 2 (Nelisse 44, Opdam 69) Att: 12,250

PSV 1 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 17)
NAC 1 (Seedorf 54) Att: 32,500

Roda JC 6 (Kone 30, Van Dijk 39, Senden 45, Redan 52, Van Dessel 73, Elberkani 87)
Willem II 1 (Mathijssen 56) Att: 12,000

Zwolle 3 (Zuurman 4, Lim-Duan 41, Van Dinteren 60)
Volendam 0 Att: 6,500

Sunday, March 21

Ajax 5 (Maxwell 16, Sneijder 26, Mitea 28, Heitinga 73, Ibrahimovic 78)
Vitesse 0 Att: 49,265

Feyenoord 1 (Kuijt 6)
RKC 0 Att: 40,000

RBC 0
Den Haag 0 Att: 5,000

Utrecht 2 (Tanghe 2, Broerse 71)
Twente 0 Att: 19,800

Friday, March 26

Den Haag 1 (Van der Gun 43)
Zwolle 1 (Takak 13) Att: 6,500

Saturday, March 27

Heerenveen 1 (Sibon 45)
RBC 0 Att: 14,700

NAC 5 (Seedorf 2, 14, 44, Engelaar 9, 23)
NEC 2 (Tumba 66, Van Rijswijk 74) Att: 12,800

Vitesse 3 (Rankovic 6, Mbamba 60, Rink 88)
RKC 3 (Hoogendorp 55, 75, Boulahrouz 64) Att: 18,500

Sunday, March 28

AZ 1 (Lindenbergh 89)
Ajax 1 (Ibrahimovic 64) Att: 8,241

Feyenoord 3 (Buffel 17, Kuijt pen 57, Smolarek 75)
Roda JC 0 Att: 42,500

Groningen 1 (Krstev 30)
Twente 0 Att: 12,100

Volendam 1 (Tuyp 51)
Utrecht 2 (Keller 61, Kras og 73) Att: 4,924

Willem II 3 (Caluwe 57, Van den Eede 75, 90)
PSV 1 (Vonlanthen 77) Att: 13,300

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	27	21	2	4	63	26	65
PSV	27	16	5	6	65	26	53
Feyenoord	27	15	7	5	50	33	52
AZ	27	15	4	8	51	31	49
Heerenveen	27	14	6	7	39	31	48
Roda JC	27	11	8	8	48	35	41
Willem II	27	11	8	8	40	42	41
Utrecht	27	11	6	10	34	37	39
NAC	27	10	8	9	46	39	38
Twente	27	12	2	13	45	44	38
RBC	27	10	8	9	29	31	38
RKC	27	8	8	11	36	34	32
Groningen	27	8	7	12	30	38	31
NEC	27	9	1	17	36	48	28
Den Haag	27	6	7	14	24	48	25
Vitesse	27	3	12	12	30	47	21
Zwolle	27	3	8	16	20	52	17
Volendam	27	4	5	18	22	66	17

LEADING GOALSCORERS

17 Mateja Kezman (PSV)
14 Ali El Khattabi (AZ)
12 Thomas Buffel (Feyenoord)
12 Dirk Kuijt (Feyenoord)
12 Blaise N'Kufo (Twente)

DUTCH CUP – semi-finals

Mar 16: Twente 2 NAC 2 (aet; Twente 4-3 on pens).
Mar 17: Sparta 3 Utrecht 3 (aet; Utrecht 4-3 on pens).

HUNGARY

Mar 6: Bekescsaba 1 Balaton 1; MTK 2 Haladas 0; Zalaegerszeg 0 Pecs 0.
Mar 7: Matav 0 Ferencvaros 0; Debrecen 2 Videoton 0.
Mar 13: Ferencvaros 0 Zalaegerszeg 0; Gyor 3 Matav 1; Videoton 1 Bekescsaba 2; Pecs 0 Debrecen 0.
Mar 14: Balaton 0 MTK 2.
Mar 16: Haladas 0 Ujpest 2.
Mar 20: MTK 2 Videoton 2; Pecs 0 Ferencvaros 1; Matav 5 Haladas 0; Zalaegerszeg 2 Gyor 0; Debrecen 1 Bekescsaba 0.
Mar 21: Ujpest 0 Balaton 1.
Mar 24: Ujpest 4 Gyor 1.
Mar 27: Bekescsaba 1 MTK 2; Videoton 0 Ujpest 2; Balaton 0 Matav 0; Gyor 1 Pecs 1; Ferencvaros 0 Debrecen 0.
Mar 28: Haladas 0 Zalaegerszeg 1.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ferencvaros	20	10	8	2	24	15	38
MTK	20	10	7	3	33	18	37
Balaton	20	11	4	5	21	10	37
Debrecen	20	10	5	5	27	14	35
Ujpest	20	7	8	5	28	21	29
Matav	20	7	6	7	27	25	27
Pecs	20	6	8	6	18	18	26
Videoton	20	5	7	8	25	30	22
Gyor	20	5	5	10	22	29	20
Bekescsaba	20	4	6	10	19	28	18
Zalaegerszeg	20	5	3	12	21	32	18
Haladas	20	3	7	10	11	36	16

ITALY

Saturday, March 6

Brescia 2 (Mauri 3, Caracciolo 39)
Juventus 3 (Miccoli pen 53, Di Vaio 55, Nedved 75) Att: 20,407

Modena 2 (Pivotto 42, Domizzi 60)
Parma 2 (Gilardino pen 45, Ferrari 87) Att: 14,247

Sunday, March 7

Ancona 1 (Ganz 5)
Reggina 1 (Di Michele 42) Att: 9,536

Chievo 0
Empoli 0 Att: 9,080

Lecce 0
Siena 0 Att: 12,523

Milan 3 (Pirlo 17, Inzaghi 35, Kaka 49)
Sampdoria 1 (Doni 27) Att: 64,967

Roma 4 (Cassano 45, Mancini 63, 90, Totti pen 89)
Inter 1 (Vieri 75) Att: 59,508

Udinese 1 (Iaquinta 46)
Perugia 1 (Di Loreto 56) Att: 15,043

Saturday, March 13

Empoli 0
Lecce 0 Att: 5,606

Sampdoria 3 (Volpi pen 9, Diana 28, Cipriani 50)
Bologna 2 (Signori 10, Nervo 69) Att: 23,522

Sunday, March 14

Inter 0
Chievo 0 Att: 50,202

Juventus 1 (Ferrara 81)
Milan 3 (Shevchenko 25, Seedorf 63, 75) Att: 52,300

Lazio 2 (Muzzi 5, Inzaghi 6)
Udinese 2 (Castroman 12, Iaquinta 89) Att: 45,296

Parma 2 (Carbone 3, Marchionni 55)
Brescia 2 (Di Biagio 30, Baggio 69) Att: 13,992

Perugia 1 (Ze Maria pen 72)
Modena 1 (Vignaroli 15) Att: 9,356

Reggina 0
Roma 0 Att: 21,286

Siena 3 (Chiesa 20, Vergassola 42, Taddei 44)
Ancona 2 (Bucchi 28, Rapajic 58) Att: 9,091

Saturday, March 20

Milan 3 (Tomasson 33, 50, Shevchenko 65)
Parma 1 (Gilardino 82) Att: 63,433

Udinese 0
Juventus 0 Att: 24,993

Sunday, March 21

Ancona 0
Inter 2 (Recoba 61, Adani 70) Att: 18,300

Bologna 3 (Tare 40, Nervo 70, Signori 80)
Brescia 0 Att: 22,000

Chievo 1 (D'Anna pen 69)
Siena 1 (Ventola 87) Att: 12,500

Empoli 1 (Rocchi 90)
Sampdoria 1 (Belleri og 18) Att: 6,500

Lazio 0
Roma 0
Match abandoned after 47mins because of crowd trouble

Lecce 1 (Dalmat 86)
Perugia 2 (Brienza 14, Di Loreto 60) Att: 14,381

Modena 1 (Kamara 60)
Reggina 2 (Bonazzoli 16, Di Michele 45) Att: 14,000

Thursday, March 25

Bologna 2 (Signori 34, Amoroso 64)
Lazio 1 (Fiore 38) Att: 18,000

Sunday, March 28

Brescia 5 (Baggio 24, 82, Mauri 30, Colucci 45, Caracciolo 74)
Ancona 2 (Rapajic 32, Maini pen 39) Att: 11,102

Juventus 3 (Maresca 56, Trezeguet 63, 83)
Modena 1 (Marazzina 68) Att: 30,666

Milan 2 (Pirlo 80, Shevchenko 90)
Chievo 2 (Sculli 22, Perrotta 39) Att: 64,862

Parma 4 (Barone 37, Gilardino pen 60, 63, Bresciano 79)
Empoli 0 Att: 12,995

Perugia 1 (Brienza 49)
Lazio 2 (Fiore 29, Giannichedda 58) Att: 9,096

Reggina 0
Inter 2 (Bonazzoli og 42, Adriano 90) Att: 21,759

Roma 1 (Cassano 33)
Bologna 2 (Pecchia 26, Tare 78) Att: 44,123

Sampdoria 2 (Flachi 8, 42)
Lecce 2 (Chevanton 35, Konan 90) Att: 22,852

Siena 1 (Flo 6)
Udinese 0 Att: 10,726

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	27	21	5	1	55	18	68
Juventus	27	18	5	4	54	31	59
Roma	26	17	6	3	56	13	57
Lazio	26	13	5	8	38	28	44
Parma	27	12	8	7	42	37	44
Inter	27	12	7	8	44	27	43
Udinese	27	10	9	8	31	29	39
Sampdoria	27	9	11	7	35	34	38
Bologna	27	9	7	11	34	38	34
Chievo	27	8	9	10	28	30	33
Brescia	27	7	10	10	42	46	31
Siena	27	7	9	11	33	39	30
Lecce	27	7	7	13	31	43	28
Reggina	27	5	12	10	22	37	27
Modena	27	5	10	12	23	37	25
Empoli	27	5	8	14	19	44	23
Perugia	27	3	13	11	34	47	22
Ancona	27	0	7	20	13	56	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
20 Andrii Shevchenko (Milan)
15 Francesco Totti (Roma)
14 Javier Chevanton (Lecce)
14 Alberto Gilardino (Parma)
14 David Trezeguet (Juventus)

ITALIAN CUP – Final, 1st leg

Mar 17 - Olympic stadium, Rome
Lazio 2 (Fiore 59, 80)
Juventus 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 62,204. **Ref:** Collina
Sent off: Tudor (Juventus) 82min

POLAND

Mar 12: Legia 2 Odra 1.
Mar 13: Polonia 1 Amica 5; Swit 0 Widzew 0; Wisla P 0 Gornik L 0; Wisla K 2 Gornik P 1.
Mar 14: Groclin 6 Katowice 0.
Mar 19: Lech 0 Amica 0.
Mar 20: Gornik P 3 Gornik Z 1; Katowice 2 Widzew 0; Swit 1 Wisla K 2; Odra 0 Groclin 2; Polonia 0 Wisla P 0.
Mar 21: Gornik L 0 Legia 3.
Mar 24: Gornik Z 0 Lech 0.
Mar 26: Legia 7 Polonia 2.
Mar 27: Widzew 0 Odra 1; Wisla P 4 Lech 4; Gornik Z 0 Wisla K 4; Amica 3 Gornik P 0; Swit 2 Katowice 1.
Mar 28: Groclin 4 Gornik L 0.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla K	16	13	0	3	46	19	39
Amica	16	11	3	2	32	14	36
Legia	16	10	5	1	32	13	35
Groclin	16	9	4	3	40	12	31
Wisla P	16	6	5	5	25	25	23
Gornik L	16	7	2	7	16	26	23
Gornik Z	16	5	6	5	17	20	21
Katowice	16	6	3	7	14	29	21
Odra	16	5	4	7	19	26	19
Lech	16	4	5	7	27	25	17
Gornik P	16	3	3	10	12	25	12
Polonia	16	2	6	8	13	29	12
Widzew	16	2	5	9	16	27	11
Swit	16	1	5	10	10	29	8

PORTUGAL

Friday, March 5

FC Porto 4 (McCarthy 45, pen 49, Ricardo Costa 64, Deco 83)
Belenenses 1 (Brasilia 89)

Saturday, March 6

Beira Mar 0
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Pedro Barbosa 7, Rochemback 10)

Boavista 1 (Cafu 7)
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Manduca 28)

Sunday, March 7

Alverca 3 (Vargas 5, 15, Zeferino 89)
Estrela Amadora 0

Gil Vicente 1 (Braima 66)
Benfica 2 (Geovanni 30, Manuel Fernandes 78)

Maritimo 2 (Van der Gaag 23, Rincon 59)
Uniao Leiria 2 (Douala 24, 45)

Moreirense 1 (Armando 68)
Guimaraes 1 (Palatsi 23)

Nacional 2 (Adriano 49, 88)
Academica 1 (Fabio Felicio pen 45)

Monday, March 8

Rio Ave 0
Sporting Braga 0

Saturday, March 13

Belenenses 0
Nacional 1 (Serginho Baiano 13)

FC Porto 1 (McCarthy 71)
Boavista 0

Sporting Braga 2 (Geraldo 43, Pena 67)
Pacos Ferreira 1 (Ze Manuel 51)

Sunday, March 14

Academica 0
Moreirense 3 (Sergio Lomba 39, Lito 44, Castro 75)

Benfica 1 (Simao pen 81)
Maritimo 0

Estrela Amadora 1 (Ibraima 85)
Rio Ave 4 (Paulo Cesar 62, 77, Evandro 69, Gama 80)

Guimaraes 0
Gil Vicente 2 (Yuri 18, 88)

Uniao Leiria 2 (Hugo Almeida 13, Renato 36)
Beira Mar 1 (Joao Paulo 18)

Monday, March 15

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Carlos Martins 31, Liedson 89)
Alverca 0

Friday, March 19

Maritimo 1 (Souza 62)
Guimaraes 1 (Nuno Assis 24)

Saturday, March 20

Rio Ave 4 (Evandro 17, 76, Jaime 25, Paulo Cesar 45)
Sporting Lisbon 0

Sunday, March 21

Alverca 1 (Ze Rui 68)
Uniao Leiria 4 (Edson 12, 45, Douala 26, Marco Almeida 84)

Beira Mar 0
Benfica 1 (Nuno Gomes 74)

Boavista 1 (Ricardo Sousa 72)
Sporting Braga 1 (Wender 68)

Gil Vicente 0
Academica 1 (Joeano 54)

Pacos Ferreira 1 (Fernando Gaucho 30)
Estrela Amadora 0

Monday, March 22

Moreirense 0
Belenenses 0

Friday, March 26

Academica 2 (Fredy 21, Joeano 71)
Maritimo 0

Saturday, March 27

Nacional 1 (Rossato 85)
Boavista 0

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Liedson 88)
Pacos Ferreira 0

Sunday, March 28

Benfica 2 (Sokota 6, Luisao 16)
Alverca 0

Estrela Amadora 0
Sporting Braga 1 (Foley 85)

Guimaraes 2 (Medeiros 17, Kata og 58)
Beira Mar 0

FC Porto 1 (Carlos Alberto 89)
Moreirense 0

Uniao Leiria 1 (Douala 66)
Rio Ave 1 (Jaime 14)

Monday, March 29

Belenenses 2 (Hugo Henrique 40, 90)
Gil Vicente 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	27	22	5	0	58	15	71
Sporting Lisbon	28	20	4	4	50	27	64
Benfica	28	18	6	4	52	25	60
Sporting Braga	28	13	8	7	28	28	47
Nacional	27	14	4	9	45	28	46
Rio Ave	28	10	11	7	37	25	41
Maritimo	28	9	12	7	28	27	39
Boavista	28	9	11	8	25	23	38
Beira Mar	28	10	6	12	35	38	36
Moreirense	28	8	10	10	23	28	34
Uniao Leiria	28	8	9	11	36	42	33
Gil Vicente	28	7	10	11	36	35	31
Alverca	28	8	5	15	29	39	29
Academica	28	8	4	16	26	34	28
Belenenses	28	6	10	12	30	48	28
Guimaraes	28	5	10	13	26	37	25
Pacos Ferreira	28	7	3	18	20	42	24
Estrela Amadora	28	3	4	21	18	61	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
17 Adriano (Nacional)
17 Benni McCarthy (FC Porto)
14 Evandro (Rio Ave)
13 Derlei (FC Porto)
12 Ricardo Sousa (Boavista)

PORTUGUESE CUP – semi-finals

Mar 16: Sporting Braga 1 FC Porto 3.
Mar 17: Benfica 3 Belenenses 1.

ROMANIA

Mar 12: Rapid 2 Oradea 1; Poli AEK 4 Apulum 3.
Mar 13: Gloria 2 Bacau 0; U Craiova 1 Otelul 1; Farul 1 National 2; Dinamo 3 Arges 0; Petrolul 5 Ceahlaul 1.
Mar 15: Brasov 0 Steaua 1.
Mar 20: Oradea 2 Dinamo 3; Arges 0 Petrolul 0; Bacau 4 U Craiova 1.
Mar 21: Otelul 2 Farul 1; National 1 Brasov 0; Ceahlaul 2 Poli AEK 0; Apulum 0 Gloria 0; Steaua 3 Rapid 3.
Mar 26: Apulum 3 Ceahlaul 2; Poli AEK 2 Arges 1.
Mar 27: Gloria 1 U Craiova 0; Farul 1 Bacau 0; Petrolul 1 Oradea 1; Dinamo 2 Steaua 1.
Mar 28: Brasov 0 Otelul 1; Rapid 0 National 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	18	13	2	3	46	22	41
Steaua	18	10	6	2	28	11	36
Rapid	18	9	6	3	30	20	33
National	18	8	4	6	22	21	28
Otelul	18	7	6	5	17	15	27
Poli AEK	18	6	8	4	20	21	26
Apulum	18	7	5	6	22	27	26
U Craiova	18	6	6	6	20	21	24
Gloria	18	6	5	7	21	26	23
Farul	18	6	4	8	24	27	22
Bacau	18	5	5	8	22	31	20
Petrolul	18	4	6	8	22	22	18
Brasov	18	5	3	10	20	30	18
Ceahlaul	18	5	3	10	21	36	18
Arges	18	4	5	9	18	21	17
Oradea	18	4	4	10	25	27	16

RUSSIA

Mar 12: CSKA 0 Torpedo-Metallurg 0.
Mar 13: Zenit 3 Rotor 2; Kryliya Sovetov 1 Saturn 1; Alaniya 0 Rubin 0; Kuban 0 Amkar 0; Rostov 0 Torpedo Moscow 4; Spartak 2 Dinamo 2.
Mar 15: Lokomotiv 3 Shinnik 0.
Mar 19: Saturn 2 Spartak 2.
Mar 20: Alaniya 0 Torpedo Moscow 0; Dinamo 1 CSKA 1.
Mar 21: Rostov 0 Shinnik 0; Kuban 1 Rubin 0; Torpedo-Metallurg 1 Zenit 1; Rotor 3 Kryliya Sovetov 2; Lokomotiv 0 Amkar 0.
Mar 27: Kryliya Sovetov 1 CSKA 1; Dinamo 5 Rotor 0; Zenit 2 Saturn 2; Rubin 1 Rostov 1.
Mar 28: Spartak 3 Torpedo-Metallurg 2; Amkar 1 Alaniya 0; Torpedo Moscow 1 Lokomotiv 1; Shinnik 1 Kuban 0.

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	3	1	2	0	8	3	5
Torpedo Moscow	3	1	2	0	5	1	5
Lokomotiv	3	1	2	0	4	1	5
Spartak	3	1	2	0	7	6	5
Zenit	3	1	2	0	6	5	5
Amkar	3	1	2	0	1	0	5
Kuban	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
Shinnik	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
Saturn	3	0	3	0	5	5	3
CSKA	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
Rotor	3	1	0	2	5	10	3
Kryliya Sovetov	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
Torpedo-Metallurg	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Rubin	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Alaniya	3	0	2	1	0	1	2
Rostov	3	0	2	1	1	5	2

SCOTLAND

Sunday, March 7

Kilmarnock 1 (Invincible 87)
Hearts 1 (Webster 60) Att: 5,297

Tuesday, March 9

Aberdeen 0
Partick 0 Att: 7,395

Saturday, March 13

Dundee 1 (Fotheringham 8)
Aberdeen 1 (Hinds 61) Att: 6,839

Hearts 1 (Wyness 75)
Rangers 1 (Moore pen 55) Att: 14,598

Partick 1 (Rowson 65)
Dundee Utd 1 (Robson 68) Att: 3,510

Sunday, March 14

Celtic 1 (Larsson 70)
Motherwell 1 (Adams 26) Att: 47,563

Wednesday, March 17

Dundee 1 (Novo 90)
Celtic 2 (Pearson 38, Larsson 68) Att: 8,593

Saturday, March 20

Dundee Utd 4 (McIntyre 11, 26, 34, Miller 21)
Kilmarnock 1 (Invincible 61) Att: 5,757

Dunfermline 1 (Darren Young 9)
Partick 0 Att: 4,349

Rangers 4 (Lovenkrands 41, F De Boer 47, Rae 81, Thompson 83)
Dundee 0 Att: 49,364

Sunday, March 21

Aberdeen 1 (Hinds 84)
Livingston 2 (McMenamin 14, O'Brien 87) Att: 7,477

Hibernian 0
Celtic 4 (Agathe 18, 81, Larsson 35, 49) Att: 9,456

Tuesday, March 23

Rangers 4 (Hutton 2, Lovenkrands 11, R De Boer 26, Mols 28)
Dunfermline 1 (Tod 21) Att: 47,487

Wednesday, March 24

Hibernian 3 (Nicol 6, Reid 37, Riordan pen 62)
Motherwell 3 (Lasley 46, Adams pen 60, Doumbe og 80) Att: 5,670

Livingston 2 (McNamee 38, S McLaughlin 72)
Dundee Utd 3 (Scotland 13, Samuel 79, McIntyre 82) Att: 3,082

Saturday, March 27

Dundee Utd 1 (Scotland 66)
Motherwell 0 Att: 7,585

Hearts 3 (Hartley 52, Pressley pen 59, Hammill 67)
Dundee 1 (Milne 8) Att: 10,491

Kilmarnock 3 (Dargo 1, Boyd 28, 76)
Aberdeen 1 (Prunty 23) Att: 7,250

Livingston 0
Dunfermline 0 Att: 3,558

Partick 1 (Thomson pen 70)
Hibernian 1 (Murdock 68) Att: 3,155

Sunday, March 28

Rangers 1 (Thompson 82)
Celtic 2 (Larsson 20, Thompson 52) Att: 49,909

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	30	28	2	0	95	16	86
Rangers	30	21	4	5	62	25	67
Hearts	29	15	7	7	43	31	52
Dunfermline	29	11	9	9	31	39	42
Dundee Utd	30	11	7	12	36	45	40
Motherwell	29	10	8	11	35	35	38
Livingston	29	8	9	12	34	42	33
Kilmarnock	29	9	4	16	37	61	31
Hibernian	29	7	9	13	28	48	30
Dundee	30	7	8	15	35	50	29
Aberdeen	30	7	7	16	33	49	28
Partick	30	3	6	21	29	57	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS
26 Henrik Larsson (Celtic)
17 Chris Sutton (Celtic)

SCOTTISH CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 6: Aberdeen 1 Livingston 1; Motherwell 0 Inverness CT 1; Partick 0 Dunfermline 3.
Mar 7: Celtic 1 Rangers 0.

Quarter-final replay
Mar 18: Livingston 1 Aberdeen 0.

LEAGUE CUP – Final

Mar 14 - Hampden Park, Glasgow
Livingston 2 (Lilley 50, McAllister 52)
Hibernian 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Young

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Mar 6: Kom Podgorica 0 Partizan 0; Borac 0 Sutjeska 2; Zeleznik 2 Vojvodina 2; Buducnost 0 Sartid 0; Zemun 1 Napredak 0; Radnicki 0 1 Hajduk K 2.
Mar 7: Obilic 3 OFK 0; Red Star 4 Zeta 0.
Mar 13: Red Star 2 Kom Podgorica 0; Zeta 4 Radnicki 0 2; Hajduk K 3 Zemun 1; Napredak 0 Buducnost 1; Sartid 0 Zeleznik 0; Vojvodina 1 Borac 2; OFK 1 Partizan 1.
Mar 17: Kom Podgorica 0 OFK 1; Partizan 3 Sutjeska 0; Obilic 2 Vojvodina 1; Borac 0 Sartid 0; Zeleznik 2 Napredak 1; Buducnost 2 Hajduk K 1; Zemun 1 Zeta 0; Radnicki 0 0 Red Star 0.
Mar 20: Radnicki 0 1 Kom Podgorica 0; Napredak 2 Borac 1; Sartid 3 Obilic 1; Zeta 0 Buducnost 0; Sutjeska 2 OFK 1.
Mar 21: Red Star 2 Zemun 1; Hajduk K 1 Zeleznik 0; Vojvodina 0 Partizan 0.
Mar 24: Sutjeska 0 Obilic 0.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	21	17	2	2	43	8	53
Partizan	21	14	4	3	40	16	46
Sartid	21	11	6	4	35	22	39
Zeleznik	21	11	4	6	29	17	37
OFK	21	9	7	5	24	22	34
Hajduk K	21	10	3	8	23	18	33
Obilic	21	9	3	9	27	22	30
Sutjeska	21	9	3	9	27	25	30
Zeta	21	8	5	8	28	27	29
Buducnost	21	8	3	10	24	33	27
Zemun	21	7	5	9	18	22	26
Vojvodina	21	4	9	8	19	26	21
Radnicki O	21	3	10	8	17	28	19
Borac	21	4	6	11	19	37	18
Napredak	21	3	4	14	17	35	13
Kom Podgorica	21	3	2	16	14	46	11

SPAIN

Saturday, March 6

Celta Vigo 1 (Edu 90)
Espanyol 5 (Tamudo 29, pen 65, Hadji 43, Sergio og 81, Vignal 87) Att: 16,000

Osasuna 1 (Webo 15)
Real Sociedad 1 (Kovacevic 86) Att: 16,738

Racing Santander 1 (Benayoun 32)
Real Madrid 1 (Solari 28) Att: 21,146

Valencia 3 (Vicente pen 21, 89, Juan Sanchez 90)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 45,000

Sunday, March 7

Albacete 1 (Pacheco 27)
Betis 0 Att: 14,005

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Guerrero 80)
Valladolid 4 (Losada 2, 75, Oscar 14, Jesus 38) Att: 36,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Nano 90)
Murcia 1 (Luis Garcia pen 55) Att: 40,000

Barcelona 3 (Luis Garcia 2, 56, Luis Enrique 17)
Mallorca 2 (Delibasic 89, Eto'o 90) Att: 71,635

Sevilla 2 (Carlos 57, 76)
Villarreal 0 Att: 30,000

Zaragoza 1 (Villa 72)
Malaga 0 Att: 27,300

Saturday, March 13

Real Madrid 1 (Portillo 28)
Zaragoza 1 (Toledo 32) Att: 70,135

Real Sociedad 2 (Karpin pen 34, Simeone og 41)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Paunovic 73) Att: 21,865

Sunday, March 14

Betis 1 (Benjamin 41)
Osasuna 1 (Aloisi 45) Att: 30,000

Celta Vigo 0
Valencia 2 (Rufete 40, 90) Att: 18,000

Espanyol 0
Racing Santander 1 (Moran 57) Att: 19,300

Malaga 2 (Luque 47, Salva 90)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Larrazabal 38) Att: 22,000

Mallorca 4 (Correa 7, Ramis 35, Eto'o pen 59, Jesus Perera 84)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Munitis 22, Djalminha 80) Att: 18,000

Murcia 0
Barcelona 2 (Saviola 4, Ronaldinho 62) Att: 15,600

Valladolid 2 (Jonathan 52, Jesus pen 63)
Sevilla 0 Att: 20,000

Villarreal 2 (Coloccini 50, Anderson 58)
Albacete 1 (Pacheco 5) Att: 17,000

Saturday, March 20

Athletic Bilbao 4 (Yeste 41, Urzaiz 44, Del Horno 76, 77)
Real Madrid 2 (Raul 46, 62) Att: 30,000

Atletico Madrid 2 (Paunovic 52, Fernando Torres 68)
Betis 1 (Joaquin 67) Att: 50,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Capdevila 41)
Murcia 0 Att: 18,000

Sunday, March 21

Albacete 2 (Aranda 10, Mikel 57)
Valladolid 0 Att: 16,000

Barcelona 1 (Ronaldinho 88)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 62,592

Osasuna 2 (Reina og 32, Quique Alvarez og 72)
Villarreal 1 (Riquelme pen 79) Att: 13,354

Racing Santander 4 (Cristian Alvarez 17, 82, Javi Guerrero 37, 86)
Celta Vigo 4 (Milosevic 27, 72, Mostovoi 45, 61) Att: 12,400

Sevilla 0
Malaga 1 (Salva 77) Att: 35,000

Valencia 5 (Mista 45, 67, 69, Baraja 56, Angulo 60)
Mallorca 1 (Eto'o pen 86) Att: 45,000

Zaragoza 1 (Villa 20)
Espanyol 1 (Fredson 30) Att: 30,000

Saturday, March 27

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo 3, pen 84)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Pochettino og 90) Att: 9,950

Real Sociedad 1 (Nihat 43)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Pandiani 10, Lopez Rekarte og 90) Att: 24,333

Sunday, March 28

Celta Vigo 0
Zaragoza 2 (Alvaro 77, Yordi 90) Att: 17,000

Malaga 1 (Diego Alonso 81)
Albacete 1 (Fabiano 29) Att: 8,000

Murcia 2 (Acciari 18, Michel 51)
Mallorca 0 Att: 5,000

Racing Santander 0
Valencia 3 (Ayoze og 9, Vicente 45, 75) Att: 13,781

Real Madrid 5 (Solari 6, Ronaldo 45, 90, Zidane 64, Michel Salgado 75)
Sevilla 1 (Julio Baptista pen 59) Att: 65,000

Valladolid 1 (Losada 23)
Osasuna 1 (Morales 75) Att: 12,000

Villarreal 0
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 9,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	30	19	7	4	63	36	64
Valencia	30	19	6	5	60	21	63
Dep La Coruna	30	17	5	8	48	28	56
Barcelona	29	16	7	6	48	32	55
Atletico Madrid	30	12	9	9	36	35	45
Osasuna	30	10	14	6	31	26	44
Athletic Bilbao	30	12	8	10	40	39	44
Malaga	30	13	3	14	40	43	42
Villarreal	30	11	7	12	39	40	40
Betis	29	9	11	9	36	32	38
Sevilla	30	10	8	12	39	36	38
Racing Santander	30	10	8	12	39	47	38
Zaragoza	30	10	7	13	34	39	37
Valladolid	30	9	9	12	36	42	36
Albacete	30	10	6	14	30	37	36
Real Sociedad	30	9	8	13	34	42	35
Mallorca	30	9	5	16	36	56	32
Espanyol	30	9	3	18	34	52	30
Celta Vigo	30	6	10	14	41	60	28
Murcia	30	3	11	16	25	46	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
24 Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
17 Mista (Valencia)
17 Salva (Malaga)

SPANISH CUP – Final

Mar 17 - Olympic stadium, Barcelona
Real Madrid 2 (Beckham 23, Roberto Carlos 47)
Zaragoza 3 (Dani 28, Villa pen 44, Galletti 111)
Aet. **HT:** 1-2. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 56,000.
Ref: Carmora Mendez
Sent off: Cani (Zaragoza) 67min; Guti (Real Madrid) 95min

SWITZERLAND

Mar 7: Aarau 0 Servette 1; Neuchatel Xamax 0 Young Boys 3; Thun 1 Grasshopper 2; Zurich 2 Wil 1900 1; St Gallen 1 Basle 1.
Mar 12: Servette 1 Wil 1900 1.
Mar 13: Basle 1 Thun 1.
Mar 14: Grasshopper 1 Zurich 2; St Gallen 3 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Young Boys 2 Aarau 2.
Mar 17: Aarau 2 Grasshopper 2; Servette 2 Neuchatel Xamax 2; Thun 2 St Gallen 3; Wil 1900 1 Young Boys 3; Zurich 1 Basle 0.
Mar 20: Basle 3 Aarau 1.
Mar 21: Grasshopper 1 Wil 1900 2; Neuchatel Xamax 1 Thun 1; St Gallen 1 Zurich 3; Young Boys 4 Servette 2.
Mar 28: Aarau 3 St Gallen 0; Servette 3 Grasshopper 0; Wil 1900 1 Basle 1; Young Boys 0 Thun 0; Zurich 1 Neuchatel Xamax 0.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	26	20	5	1	71	23	65
Young Boys	26	16	5	5	56	34	53
Servette	26	13	6	7	48	40	45
Zurich	26	11	3	12	42	38	36
Grasshopper	26	9	4	13	44	55	31
Thun	26	7	9	10	34	45	30
Aarau	26	6	10	10	43	51	28
St Gallen	26	7	6	13	36	51	27
Wil 1900	26	6	8	12	32	46	26
Neuchatel X	26	4	6	16	23	46	18

TURKEY

Mar 6: Konyaspor 1 Bursaspor 1; Genclerbirligi 0 Fenerbahce 1; Diyarbakirspor 0 Rizespor 1; Elazigspor 1 Samsunspor 0.
Mar 7: Galatasaray 3 Adanaspor 2; Istanbulspor 2 Ankaragucu 3; Malatyaspor 0 Denizlispor 1; Gaziantepspor 2 Sebatspor 2; Trabzonspor 3 Besiktas 0.
Mar 12: Ankaragucu 1 Trabzonspor 2.
Mar 13: Sebatspor 2 Galatasaray 1; Denizlispor 2 Istanbulspor 0; Fenerbahce 5 Konyaspor 2; Bursaspor 3 Malatyaspor 2.
Mar 14: Samsunspor 3 Diyarbakirspor 1; Besiktas 5 Elazigspor 3; Rizespor 1 Gaziantepspor 2.
Mar 19: Diyarbakirspor 3 Besiktas 1.
Mar 20: Konyaspor 4 Adanaspor 1; Gaziantepspor 1 Samsunspor 0; Galatasaray 1 Rizespor 2.

Mar 21: Elazigspor 1 Ankaragucu 2; Fenerbahce 3 Bursaspor 1; Trabzonspor 1 Denizlispor 0; Istanbulspor 0 Malatyaspor 0; Genclerbirligi 3 Sebatspor 1.
Mar 26: Samsunspor 1 Galatasaray 0.
Mar 27: Ankaragucu 3 Diyarbakirspor 1; Denizlispor 3 Elazigspor 0; Adanaspor 1 Fenerbahce 2; Besiktas 4 Gaziantepspor 1; Rizespor 2 Genclerbirligi 0; Bursaspor 1 Istanbulspor 1; Sebatspor 1 Konyaspor 1; Malatyaspor 2 Trabzonspor 3.
Mar 31: Adanaspor 2 Genclerbirligi 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	27	19	6	2	65	31	63
Besiktas	27	17	6	4	58	33	57
Trabzonspor	27	17	5	5	45	30	56
Denizlispor	27	15	3	9	43	28	48
Gaziantepspor	27	14	3	10	41	41	45
Galatasaray	27	11	8	8	40	35	41
Diyarbakirspor	27	11	7	9	41	37	40
Samsunspor	27	11	6	10	38	37	39
Ankaragucu	27	10	6	11	39	42	36
Genclerbirligi	27	10	5	12	45	39	35
Malatyaspor	27	8	10	9	35	30	34
Konyaspor	27	7	12	8	42	44	33
Rizespor	27	10	3	14	30	44	33
Istanbulspor	27	7	7	13	34	38	28
Sebatspor	27	6	9	12	32	43	27
Bursaspor	27	4	10	13	23	36	22
Elazigspor	27	5	6	16	34	63	21
Adanaspor	27	3	4	20	27	61	13

UKRAINE

Mar 14: Shakhtar 2 Metalurh D 0; Illichivets 1 Vorskla 0; Dynamo 0 Tavriya 0; Zirka 1 Chornomorets 1; Karpaty 0 Arsenal 0; Borysfen 2 Kryvbas 1; Metalurh Z 0 Dnipro 0.
Mar 15: Obolon 1 Volyn 0.
Mar 20: Dnipro 1 Shakhtar 0; Kryvbas 1 Metalurh Z 0; Arsenal 2 Borysfen 0; Chornomorets 1 Karpaty 0; Volyn 3 Zirka 1; Tavriya 1 Obolon 1; Vorskla 1 Dynamo 3; Metalurh D 5 Illichivets 1.
Mar 27: Shakhtar 2 Illichivets 0; Dynamo 2 Metalurh D 1; Zirka 1 Tavriya 1; Karpaty 0 Volyn 1; Borysfen 1 Chornomorets 1; Metalurh Z 1 Arsenal 0; Dnipro 2 Kryvbas 1.
Mar 28: Obolon 1 Vorskla 0.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	18	14	3	1	37	11	45
Dynamo	18	13	4	1	39	12	43
Dnipro	18	11	4	3	30	13	37
Metalurh D	18	8	5	5	31	23	29
Obolon	18	8	5	5	19	18	29
Chornomorets	18	6	10	2	22	19	28
Arsenal	18	7	4	7	22	20	25
Metalurh Z	18	5	5	8	14	20	20
Borysfen	18	5	4	9	11	20	19
Illichivets	18	4	7	7	19	29	19
Volyn	18	5	3	10	15	25	18
Karpaty	18	4	5	9	16	22	17
Kryvbas	18	4	5	9	13	22	17
Vorskla	18	4	5	9	13	26	17
Tavriya	18	2	8	8	9	17	14
Zirka	18	2	7	9	10	23	13

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Mar 11 - Sao Caetano do Sul
Sao Caetano (Bra) 1 (Marcinho 77)
America (Mex) 2 (Pardo 69, Navia 85)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

Mar 16 - Montevideo
Penarol (Uru) 4 (Cedres 9, Bueno 12, Rodriguez 64, Diogo 90)
The Strongest (Bol) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Sent off: Vaca 61min, Rojas 75min (both The Strongest)

Mar 17 - Mexico City
America 2 (Blanco 36, 62)
Sao Caetano 1 (Gilberto 13)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)

Mar 23 - La Paz
The Strongest 2 (Da Rosa pen 34, 71)
Penarol 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)
Sent off: Coelho (The Strongest) 68min; Bizera (Penarol) 78min

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Sao Caetano	4	1	1	2	7	7	4
Penarol	4	1	1	2	6	6	4
The Strongest	4	1	1	2	4	8	4

Apr 8: Sao Caetano v Penarol
Apr 8: America v The Strongest
Apr 15: The Strongest v Sao Caetano
Apr 15: Penarol v America

Group 2

Mar 9 - Buenos Aires
Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 2 (Valdemarin 34, Zarate 78)
Once Caldas (Col) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)
Sent off: Alcazar (Once Caldas) 23min; Somoza (Velez) 26min

Mar 17 - Manizales
Once Caldas 2 (Galvan 38, 55)
Velez Sarsfield 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rezende (Bra)

Mar 18 - Maracaibo
Maracaibo (Ven) 1 (Colliard 22)
Fenix (Uru) 1 (Broli 50)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Maracaibo	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Velez Sarsfield	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Fenix	4	1	1	2	4	7	4

Apr 6: Velez Sarsfield v Fenix
Apr 6: Once Caldas v Maracaibo
Apr 22: Maracaibo v Velez Sarsfield
Apr 22: Fenix v Once Caldas

Group 3

Mar 10 - Torreon
Santos Laguna (Mex) 1 (Borgetti 55)
Cruzeiro (Bra) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)

Mar 16 - Torreon
Santos Laguna 3 (Borgetti 48, 67, Noriega 85)
Caracas (Ven) 1 (Cominges 43)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Pezzota (Arg)

Mar 17 - Belo Horizonte
Cruzeiro 5 (Cris 6, Guilherme 43, 73, Leandro 46, Maicon 89)
U de Concepcion (Chl) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Sent off: Gomez (U de Concepcion) 68min

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos Laguna	5	3	2	0	8	4	11
Cruzeiro	5	3	1	1	12	4	10
Caracas	5	2	0	3	6	9	6
U de Concepcion	5	0	1	4	5	14	1

Apr 15: Caracas v Cruzeiro
Apr 15: U de Concepcion v Santos Laguna

Group 4

Mar 10 - Calama
Cobreloa (Chl) 0
Alianza Lima (Per) 1 (Farfan 22)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Sent off: Cisternas 43min, Perez 87min (both Cobreloa)

Mar 10 - Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo (Bra) 1 (Luis Fabiano 74)
LDU Quito (Ecu) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Brazenas (Arg)

Mar 24 - Calama
Cobreloa 1 (Dinamarca pen 27)
Sao Paulo 2 (Grafite 15, Marquinhos 22)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

Mar 25 - Lima
Alianza Lima 1 (Farfan 43)
LDU Quito 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Duque (Col)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	5	4	0	1	8	6	12
LDU Quito	5	3	0	2	8	2	9
Alianza Lima	5	3	0	2	5	5	9
Cobreloa	5	0	0	5	2	10	0

Apr 7: Sao Paulo v Alianza Lima
Apr 7: LDU Quito v Cobreloa

Group 5

Mar 11 - Arequipa
Cienciano (Per) 1 (Ibarra 48)
Nacional (Uru) 2 (Eguren 21, Coelho 44)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)
Sent off: Carty (Cienciano) 56min; Medina (Nacional) 56min

Mar 16 - Quito
El Nacional (Ecu) 1 (Borja 67)
Independiente (Arg) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Souza (Bra)
Sent off: Castro (El Nacional) 81min

Mar 23 - Quito
El Nacional 3 (Ordonez 64, Borja 71, 79)
Cienciano 3 (Lobaton 45, Bazalar 82, Acasiete 85)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Brand (Ven)

Mar 25 - Buenos Aires
Independiente 1 (Garcia 83)
Nacional 1 (Romero 52)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	5	2	3	0	4	2	9
Independiente	5	2	2	1	7	4	8
El Nacional	5	1	2	2	4	6	5
Cienciano	5	1	1	3	7	10	4

Apr 20: Cienciano v Independiente
Apr 20: Nacional v El Nacional

Group 6

Mar 9 - San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 2 (Rondon 35, 90)
Libertad (Par) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

Mar 11 - Ibague
Tolima (Col) 2 (Siciliano 63, Pena 67)
River Plate (Arg) 3 (Montenegro 50, Cavenaghi 88, 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)

Mar 17 - Asuncion
Libertad 1 (Alvarenga 17)
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Beraza 55)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Sent off: Silva da Fonseca (Dep Tachira) 87min

Mar 18 - Buenos Aires
River Plate 1 (Gonzalez 38)
Tolima 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Dep Tachira	4	1	3	0	4	2	6
Tolima	4	0	2	2	3	5	2
Libertad	4	0	2	2	2	7	2

Apr 7: Libertad v River Plate
Apr 8: Deportivo Tachira v Tolima
Apr 14: River Plate v Deportivo Tachira
Apr 14: Tolima v Libertad

Group 7

Mar 11 - Santos
Santos (Bra) 1 (Robinho 68)
Barcelona (Ecu) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)
Sent off: Robinho (Santos) 85min

Mar 18 - Asuncion
Guarani (Par) 3 (Fukuda 6, Diaz 54, pen 65)
Jorge Wilstermann (Bol) 1 (Leitao Polieri 10)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Viera (Uru)

Mar 24 - Cochabamba
Jorge Wilstermann 2 (Tulio 19, 63)
Barcelona 2 (Gavica 72, Vera 85)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

Mar 25 - Asuncion
Guarani 1 (Manzur 72)
Santos 2 (Basilio 50, Robson pen 64)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzota (Arg)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	5	4	1	0	11	6	13
Guarani	5	1	3	1	6	5	6
Barcelona	5	1	2	2	7	6	5
J Wilstermann	5	0	2	3	5	12	2

Apr 14: Santos v Jorge Wilstermann
Apr 14: Barcelona v Guarani

Group 8

Mar 10 - Cali
Deportivo Cali (Col) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 1 (Vargas 68)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

Mar 18 - La Paz
Bolivar (Bol) 2 (Suarez 4, Castillo 46)
Colo Colo (Chl) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carpio (Ecu)

Mar 24 - Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 3 (Burdisso 57, Rodriguez 86, Cangele 88)
Deportivo Cali 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)

Mar 25 - Santiago
Colo Colo 2 (Ubeda 35, Neira 59)
Bolivar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Bolivar	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Dep Cali	4	2	0	2	6	7	6
Colo Colo	4	1	0	3	4	7	3

Apr 7: Bolivar v Deportivo Cali
Apr 8: Colo Colo v Boca Juniors
Apr 21: Boca Juniors v Bolivar
Apr 21: Deportivo Cali v Colo Colo

Group 9

Mar 9 - Lima
Sporting Cristal (Per) 3 (Zegarra 51, Bonnet 54, Sergio Junior 63)
Olimpia (Par) 2 (Franco 1, Lopez pen 88)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Sent off: Moisella (Sporting Cristal) 88min

Mar 10 - Curitiba
Coritiba (Bra) 2 (Reginaldo 19, Adriano 89)
Rosario Central (Arg) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Cervantes (Col)

Mar 16 - Asuncion
Olimpia 2 (Caballero 4, Orteman 12)
Sporting Cristal 1 (Zegarra 84)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

Mar 23 - Lima
Sporting Cristal 4 (Soto 12, pen 87, Rivarola og 42, Moisela 66)
Rosario Central 1 (Carbonari 40)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Sent off: Zegarra (Sporting Cristal) 15min; Talamonti (Rosario) 41min

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	5	3	1	1	13	7	10
Rosario Central	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Olimpia	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
Coritiba	4	1	1	2	4	7	4

Apr 6: Olimpia v Coritiba
Apr 13: Coritiba v Sporting Cristal
Apr 13: Rosario Central v Olimpia

Group winners and the five best runners-up qualify for second round; other four runners-up play off in two head-to-head ties for last two second round berths

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, March 5

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zarate 10, 51)
Chacarita Juniors 2 (Graf 14, Precone 36)

Saturday, March 6

Rosario Central 3 (Talamonti 17, Campora 62, Encina 79)
Racing Club 1 (Lopez 8)

San Lorenzo 0
Talleres Cordoba 0

Sunday, March 7

Arsenal 0
Estudiantes 0

Banfield 1 (Bilos 69)
Boca Juniors 2 (Barijho 27, 45)

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Blanco 58, Fuertes 83)
Atletico Rafaela 1 (Jimenez 65)

Gimnasia LP 0
Lanus 0

Olimpo 2 (Mena 17, Gonzalez og 41)
Nueva Chicago 2 (San Esteban 19, Gonzalez pen 39)

Quilmes 3 (Gerlo 36, Lopez pen 51, Ceballos 83)
Newell's Old Boys 3 (Vasquez pen 10, Bermudez, Rosales 58)

River Plate 4 (Salas 15, Montenegro 27, 61, Cavenaghi 44)
Independiente 1 (Quinteros pen 59)

Friday, March 12

Independiente 3 (Losada pen 4, Caballero 13, Alayes og 45)
Quilmes 1 (Lopez 48)

Saturday, March 13

Atletico Rafaela 0
San Lorenzo 0

Talleres Cordoba 1 (Cuba 75)
Gimnasia LP 0

Sunday, March 14

Estudiantes 3 (Farias 10, 59, 61)
Olimpo 1 (Sarmiento 42)

Lanus 3 (Andrizzi 46, Iribarren 57, Pelletieri 90)
Rosario Central 0

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Vasquez 52)
Arsenal 1 (Calderon 1)

Nueva Chicago 1 (Gonzalez 12)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Racing Club 3 (Lopez 36, Gonzalez 67, Fernandez pen 79)
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zarate 58, 90)

River Plate 2 (Pereyra 8, Salas 67)
Banfield 3 (Perez 47, 50, Bustos Montoya 83)

Friday, March 19

San Lorenzo 2 (Luna 8, Romagnoli 42)
Nueva Chicago 2 (Mandra 11, Tilger 85)

Saturday, March 20

Arsenal 0
Independiente 0

Rosario Central 0
Talleres Cordoba 2 (Piriz Alvez 3, Salas 55)

Sunday, March 21

Banfield 0
Chacarita Juniors 0

Boca Juniors 4 (Barros Schelotto 40, pen 86, Calvo 76, Villarreal 89)
Racing Club 1 (Burdisso og 60)

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Fuertes 89)
Estudiantes 0

Gimnasia LP 3 (Choy 31, Castillo 39, 55)
Atletico Rafaela 4 (Del Bono 43, Bovaglio 58, Gandin 77, Forestello 80)

Olimpo 1 (Delorte 12)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Vasquez 8)

Quilmes 2 (Lopez 15, Alayes 47)
River Plate 1 (Montenegro 19)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Bustos 76, Bianchi 78)
Lanus 1 (Graziani 14)

Friday, March 26

Estudiantes 1 (Farias 59)
San Lorenzo 1 (Romagnoli pen 83)

Racing Club 2 (Gonzalez 48, Benitez 90)
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Ojeda 77)

Saturday, March 27

Atletico Rafaela 3 (Semino 38, Gandin 42, Villa 68)
Rosario Central 1 (Carbonari 62)

Lanus 0
Boca Juniors 3 (Tevez 1, 42, Cardozo 9)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Fuertes 56)

Nueva Chicago 1 (Kmet 59)
Gimnasia LP 2 (Castillo 16, Rueda 68)

Quilmes 1 (Carrario 8)
Banfield 0

River Plate 5 (Gallardo 10, 11, 86, Sand 46, 50)
Arsenal 0

Talleres Cordoba 1 (Osorio 36)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Sunday, March 28

Independiente 1 (Quinteros pen 9)
Olimpo 0

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Talleres Cordoba	7	6	1	0	16	4	19
Boca Juniors	6	4	2	0	14	6	14
River Plate	7	4	1	2	20	10	13
Racing Club	7	4	1	2	13	11	13
Colon Santa Fe	7	4	1	2	8	9	13
Velez Sarsfield	7	3	2	2	14	11	11
Independiente	7	3	2	2	10	8	11
San Lorenzo	7	2	4	1	9	7	10
Nueva Chicago	7	2	4	1	11	10	10
Quilmes	7	2	3	2	8	9	9
Gimnasia LP	7	2	2	3	11	8	8
Atletico Rafaela	7	2	2	3	10	11	8
Banfield	7	2	2	3	7	8	8
Estudiantes	7	2	2	3	6	10	8
Lanus	7	2	1	4	9	12	7
Arsenal	7	1	3	3	8	14	6
Newell's OB	7	0	5	2	9	11	5
Olimpo	7	1	2	4	7	14	5
Rosario Central	7	1	1	5	6	15	4
Chacarita Jnrs	6	0	3	3	5	13	3

LEADING GOALSCORERS

7 Rolando Zarate (Velez Sarsfield)
5 Jose Calderon (Arsenal)
5 Aldo Osorio (Talleres Cordoba)

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 6: Iberoamericana 1 The Strongest 4.
Mar 7: Bolivar 0 Jorge Wilstermann 2; Blooming 2 La Paz 1; Real Potosi 2 San Jose 1; Santa Cruz 1 Oriente 1; Aurora 1 Union Central 3.
Mar 10: Jorge Wilstermann 6 Blooming 2; Union Central 1 Bolivar 2; Oriente 4 Iberoamericana 0; San Jose 5 Santa Cruz 1.
Mar 11: The Strongest 1 Aurora 2; La Paz 2 Real Potosi 1.
Mar 13: Iberoamericana 1 San Jose 0.
Mar 14: Blooming 1 Bolivar 2; Real Potosi 2 Jorge Wilstermann 1; Aurora 2 Oriente 2; Santa Cruz 1 La Paz 3.
Mar 28: The Strongest 1 Union Central 1.

BOLIVIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
J Wilstermann	6	4	0	2	18	9	12
The Strongest	6	3	1	2	11	7	10
Aurora	6	3	1	2	15	12	10
Real Potosi	6	3	1	2	11	11	10
La Paz	6	3	0	3	9	11	9
Oriente	5	1	4	0	9	5	7
Union Central	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Santa Cruz	6	2	1	3	9	13	7
San Jose	6	2	0	4	11	12	6
Iberoamericana	6	2	0	4	5	16	6
Blooming	5	1	0	4	6	12	3

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 5: Huachipato 3 Palestino 2.
Mar 6: Everton 2 Dep La Serena 0; San Felipe 1 U de Chile 0; Union Espanola 2 Audax Italiano 0; Colo Colo 0 U de Concepcion 2; Coquimbo Unido 4 Dep Temuco 3.
Mar 7: Rangers 0 Cobreloa 2; Puerto Montt 4 Cobresal 0; U Catolica 0 Santiago Wanderers 1.
Mar 9: U de Chile 0 Everton 0; Dep La Serena 3 Palestino 2.
Mar 10: U Catolica 5 Huachipato 1; Santiago Wanderers 2 Coquimbo Unido 2; Dep Temuco 0 Colo Colo 1; U de Concepcion 0 Rangers 0; Audax Italiano 2 Puerto Montt 2; Cobresal 2 San Felipe 2.
Mar 13: Coquimbo Unido 3 U Catolica 2; Everton 1 Cobresal 0; Union Espanola 2 U de Concepcion 2.
Mar 14: Huachipato 4 Dep La Serena 2; Palestino 2 U de Chile 3; San Felipe 1 Audax Italiano 1; Puerto Montt 1 Cobreloa 1; Rangers 2 Dep Temuco 3; Colo Colo 4 Santiago Wanderers 1.
Mar 17: Cobreloa 2 Union Espanola 2.
Mar 19: Coquimbo Unido 3 Huachipato 2.
Mar 20: U de Concepcion 1 Puerto Montt 1; U de Chile 3 Dep La Serena 1.
Mar 21: U Catolica 1 Colo Colo 2; Santiago Wanderers 3 Rangers 0; Dep Temuco 2 Union Espanola 2; Cobreloa 3 San Felipe 1; Audax Italiano 1 Everton 1; Cobresal 3 Palestino 3.
Mar 27: Palestino 0 U de Concepcion 1.

CHILE – OPENING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	8	5	0	3	10	12	15
Audax Italiano	8	2	3	3	15	14	9
San Felipe	8	2	3	3	8	12	9
Cobresal	8	1	2	5	13	19	5

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U de Concepcion	9	6	3	0	22	7	21
Palestino	9	4	1	4	23	18	13
Dep La Serena	8	4	0	4	17	17	12
Dep Temuco	8	2	1	5	10	19	7
Rangers	8	0	1	7	6	21	1

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cobreloa	8	4	3	1	16	9	15
Union Espanola	8	4	3	1	22	17	15
Coquimbo Unido	8	4	2	2	19	23	14
Everton	8	3	2	3	10	11	11
U Catolica	8	2	0	6	15	16	6

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U de Chile	8	5	1	2	19	8	16
Sant Wanderers	8	4	1	3	11	10	13
Huachipato	8	4	1	3	17	17	13
Puerto Montt	8	2	3	3	13	16	9

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 3: Indep Santa Fe 1 Tolima 1; Once Caldas 2 Magdalena 0.
Mar 4: At Junior 0 Pereira 0.
Mar 6: America 3 Tulua 2.
Mar 7: Indep Medellin 1 Bucaramanga 1; At Huila 1 Envigado 1; Indep Santa Fe 2 Magdalena 1; At Junior 2 Millonarios 1; Quindio 0 Tolima 1; Chico 1 Pereira 1; Dep Pasto 2 At Nacional 0.
Mar 11: At Nacional 0 America 1; Dep Cali 2 At Huila 1; Pereira 2 Dep Pasto 0; Millonarios 0 Quindio 0; Magdalena 0 At Junior 0; Envigado 1 Indep Santa Fe 1; Tulua 3 Indep Medellin 1.
Mar 13: America 0 Indep Medellin 0.
Mar 14: Chico 2 Millonarios 4; At Huila 3 Bucaramanga 1; At Junior 2 Envigado 0; Dep Pasto 1 Tolima 0; Indep Santa Fe 0 Dep Cali 0; Quindio 1 Magdalena 1; At Nacional 2 Pereira 0; Once Caldas 2 Tulua 1.
Mar 21: America 3 Dep Cali 1; Indep Medellin 0 At Nacional 2; Indep Santa Fe 1 Millonarios 1; Bucaramanga 2 Chico 1; Once Caldas 0 Pereira 1; At Huila 2 Tolima 2; At Junior 2 Magdalena 1; Quindio 1 Envigado 1; Tulua 1 Dep Pasto 0.
Mar 24: Bucaramanga 0 Once Caldas 2.
Mar 27: Once Caldas 2 Dep Cali 0; Tolima 0 Chico 0.

COLOMBIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Once Caldas	9	7	1	1	12	3	22
At Nacional	9	6	1	2	15	7	19
America	9	6	1	2	16	9	19
Dep Pasto	9	5	1	3	8	7	16
At Junior	9	4	4	1	11	6	16
Pereira	9	4	4	1	9	6	16
Dep Cali	9	4	2	3	12	10	14
Tulua	9	4	1	4	17	16	13
At Huila	9	3	3	3	13	12	12
Indep Medellin	9	2	4	3	7	11	10
Millonarios	9	2	3	4	9	11	9
Indep Santa Fe	9	1	6	2	8	9	9
Envigado	9	1	6	2	12	14	9
Tolima	9	1	5	3	5	8	8
Chico	9	1	4	4	10	14	7
Bucaramanga	9	1	4	4	10	16	7
Magdalena	9	0	4	5	5	12	4
Quindio	9	0	4	5	6	14	4

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 6: Espoli 2 Dep Quito 1.
Mar 7: Aucas 1 Dep Cuenca 0; LDU Quito 3 Macara 1; Olmedo 1 El Nacional 3; Barcelona 2 Emelec 1.
Mar 13: Dep Quito 1 Olmedo 2; El Nacional 0 Aucas 0.
Mar 14: Dep Cuenca 0 LDU Quito 1; Macara 2 Barcelona 1; Emelec 2 Espoli 0.
Mar 20: LDU Quito 2 El Nacional 0; Barcelona 1 Dep Cuenca 0.
Mar 21: Macara 0 Dep Quito 0; Aucas 1 Espoli 0; Olmedo 0 Emelec 1.

ECUADOR – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	8	6	0	2	17	11	18
Aucas	8	5	2	1	10	4	17
El Nacional	8	3	3	2	9	6	12
Emelec	8	4	0	4	6	7	12
Barcelona	8	3	2	3	11	10	11
Dep Quito	8	3	1	4	12	12	10
Dep Cuenca	8	3	1	4	7	7	10
Macara	8	2	3	3	7	11	9
Olmedo	8	2	1	5	7	12	7
Espoli	8	1	3	4	5	11	6

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 5: Libertad 4 Olimpia 1.
Mar 6: Sport Colombia 1 Sol de America 1.
Mar 7: Nacional 1 12 de Octubre 0; Tacuary 0 Cerro Porteno 1; Sportivo Luqueno 0 Guarani 0.
Mar 12: Cerro Porteno 1 12 de Octubre 2.
Mar 13: Olimpia 5 Sport Colombia 3.
Mar 14: Sol de America 0 Tacuary 1; Sportivo Luqueno 1 Nacional 1; Guarani 0 Libertad 6.
Mar 17: Nacional 2 Cerro Porteno 3.
Mar 20: Olimpia 1 12 de Octubre 0.
Mar 21: Sol de America 0 Cerro Porteno 2; Libertad 0 Nacional 1; Sportivo Luqueno 2 Sport Colombia 1; Guarani 1 Tacuary 1.
Mar 24: Libertad 6 Sportivo Luqueno 1; Tacuary 3 Olimpia 0.
Mar 28: 12 de Octubre 3 Sol de America 1.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad	8	6	1	1	24	6	19
Cerro Porteno	8	5	2	1	12	6	17
Tacuary	8	4	2	2	11	4	14
Olimpia	8	4	2	2	12	12	14
Sportivo Luqueno	8	2	4	2	10	13	10
Nacional	8	2	3	3	7	10	9
Guarani	7	2	3	2	5	10	9
12 de Octubre	8	2	2	4	8	11	8
Sport Colombia	7	1	2	4	9	15	5
Sol de America	8	0	1	7	5	16	1

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 28: Melgar 3 Universidad SMP 1.
Feb 29: Estudiantes 1 Universitario 0; Sporting Cristal 5 Universidad CV 0; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Alianza Atletico 2; Dep Wanka 0 Cienciano 3; Union Huaral 2 Sport Boys 0; Alianza Lima 2 At Universidad 0.
Mar 3: Alianza Atletico 2 Melgar 2; At Universidad 2 Coronel Bolognesi 0; Sport Boys 2 Dep Wanka 0; Universidad SMP 2 Estudiantes 2; Universitario 0 Union Huaral 0.
Mar 6: Sporting Cristal 0 Alianza Atletico 1.
Mar 7: Estudiantes 0 Cienciano 1; Melgar 1 Universitario 1; Union Huaral 0 Universidad CV 1; Alianza Lima 3 Coronel Bolognesi 1; Dep Wanka 3 At Universidad 1; Universidad SMP 3 Sport Boys 1.
Mar 13: At Universidad 0 Sporting Cristal 1; Universitario 1 Universidad SMP 0.
Mar 14: Alianza Atletico 1 Alianza Lima 1; Universidad CV 1 Dep Wanka 0; Coronel Bolognesi 2 Melgar 3; Cienciano 3 Union Huaral 1; Sport Boys 0 Estudiantes 0.
Mar 17: Universidad CV 1 Alianza Lima 1.
Mar 19: Universitario 3 Cienciano 0.
Mar 20: Sporting Cristal 0 Alianza Lima 5.
Mar 21: Estudiantes 0 At Universidad 0; Universidad SMP 0 Universidad CV 1; Melgar 2 Sport Boys 0; Union Huaral 0 Alianza Atletico 2; Dep Wanka 2 Coronel Bolognesi 1.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Lima	5	3	2	0	12	3	11
Melgar	5	3	2	0	11	6	11
Alianza Atletico	5	3	2	0	8	3	11
Universidad CV	5	3	1	1	4	6	10
Cienciano	4	3	0	1	7	4	9
Universitario	5	2	2	1	5	2	8
Sporting Cristal	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Estudiantes	5	1	3	1	3	3	6
Dep Wanka	5	2	0	3	5	8	6
Universidad SMP	5	1	1	3	6	8	4
At Universidad	5	1	1	3	3	6	4
Union Huaral	5	1	1	3	3	6	4
Sport Boys	5	1	1	3	3	7	4
Coronel Bolognesi	5	0	0	5	4	12	0

URUGUAY

CLASSIFICATION STAGE

Mar 19: Cerrito 1 Rentistas 1.
Mar 20: Penarol 1 Defensor 1.
Mar 21: Nacional 3 Tacuarembo 0; Central Espanol 2 Plaza 1; Liverpool 0 Bella Vista M 0; Miramar Misiones 0 Dep Maldonado 0; Wanderers 1 Dep Colonia 1; Rocha 3 Danubio 3.
Mar 22: Fenix 4 Cerro 2.
Mar 26: Defensor 2 Rocha 0.
Mar 27: Cerrito 2 Fenix 1.
Mar 28: Cerro 1 Tacuarembo 0; Central Espanol 1 Miramar Misiones 1; Plaza 2 Dep Maldonado 2; Liverpool 2 Wanderers 0; Bella Vista M 1 Dep Colonia 0.

URUGUAY – CLASSIFICATION STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Defensor	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Liverpool	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Central Espanol	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Cerrito	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Bella Vista M	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Nacional	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Fenix	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Cerro	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Dep Maldonado	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Miramar Misiones	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Danubio	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Penarol	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Rentistas	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Plaza	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Dep Colonia	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Rocha	2	0	1	1	3	5	1
Wanderers	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Tacuarembo	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 3: Dep Tachira 3 Ital-Chacao 1.
Mar 6: Trujillanos 0 El Vigia 0.
Mar 7: Caracas 3 Ital-Chacao 1; Estudiantes 1 Mineros Guayana 0; Monagas 0 Carabobo 0.
Mar 13: Trujillanos 1 Mineros Guayana 1.
Mar 14: Monagas 1 Maracaibo 0; Estudiantes 1 Carabobo 3; Ital-Chacao 0 El Vigia 0.
Mar 21: Caracas 3 El Vigia 0; Mineros Guayana 2 Ital-Chacao 1; Carabobo 2 Trujillanos 1; Maracaibo 2 Estudiantes 2; Dep Tachira 0 Monagas 0.
Mar 24: Maracaibo 0 Caracas 1.
Mar 28: Dep Tachira 0 Caracas 1.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Caracas	11	9	1	1	22	6	28
Carabobo	11	6	2	3	13	9	20
Dep Tachira	10	5	3	2	16	10	18
Mineros Guayana	11	4	5	2	15	10	17
Ital-Chacao	11	3	4	4	11	14	13
Monagas	11	2	6	3	9	9	12
Trujillanos	11	1	8	2	7	8	11
Estudiantes	11	2	5	4	12	17	11
Maracaibo	10	1	4	5	7	14	7
El Vigia	11	1	2	8	6	21	5

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 29: America 2 San Luis 0; Pumas UNAM 2 Morelia 1; Irapuato 2 Atlas 1; Puebla 1 Gallos Blancos 0; Tecos UAG 3 Atlante 0.
Mar 6: Jaguares 3 Tecos UAG 3; Morelia 2 Cruz Azul 0; Guadalajara 2 Irapuato 0; San Luis 1 Atlas 4; Tigres 2 Puebla 3.
Mar 7: Pachuca 2 Veracruz 1; Toluca 2 Necaxa 2; Atlante 0 Monterrey 0; Gallos Blancos 3 Pumas UNAM 3; Santos 0 America 1.
Mar 13: Veracruz 0 Morelia 1; Cruz Azul 2 Gallos Blancos 0; Monterrey 0 Jaguares 1; Necaxa 3 Guadalajara 0; Atlas 2 Santos 0.
Mar 14: Pumas UNAM 2 Tigres 1; Tecos UAG 2 Pachuca 5; Puebla 1 Toluca 2; Irapuato 3 San Luis 1; America 1 Atlante 1.
Mar 20: Jaguares 2 America 1; Morelia 3 Tecos UAG 2; Guadalajara 0 Puebla 0; Tigres 1 Cruz Azul 1; Necaxa 0 Irapuato 1.
Mar 21: Pachuca 1 Monterrey 1; Toluca 2 Pumas UNAM 2; Atlante 3 Atlas 4; Gallos Blancos 0 Veracruz 0; Santos 2 San Luis 0.
Mar 27: Veracruz 1 Tigres 0; Cruz Azul 3 Toluca 1; America 1 Pachuca 2; Monterrey 1 Morelia 1; San Luis 0 Atlante 0; Atlas 0 Jaguares 0.
Mar 28: Irapuato 0 Santos 3; Pumas UNAM 3 Guadalajara 0; Puebla 2 Necaxa 2; Tecos UAG 1 Gallos Blancos 2.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atlas	12	5	4	3	20	17	19
Toluca	12	5	4	3	17	15	19
Pachuca	12	5	4	3	18	18	19
Monterrey	12	2	7	3	13	12	13
Puebla	12	3	4	5	14	16	13

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jaguares	12	9	2	1	23	12	29
Morelia	12	4	3	5	14	15	15
San Luis	12	3	4	5	11	17	13
Cruz Azul	12	3	3	6	15	19	12
Tigres	12	3	2	7	22	25	11

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas UNAM	12	7	4	1	26	13	25
Santos	12	5	1	6	18	16	16
America	12	4	4	4	17	17	16
Gallos Blancos	12	3	6	3	15	17	15
Tecos UAG	12	3	2	7	22	28	11

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	12	6	2	4	11	12	20
Irapuato	12	5	3	4	16	18	18
Necaxa	12	4	5	3	17	14	17
Atlante	12	2	5	5	16	20	11
Veracruz	12	2	5	5	14	18	11

AFRICA

SUPER CUP

Feb 22 - Aba, Nigeria
Enyimba (Nig) 1 (Osim 21)
Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Nwaneri (Enyimba)

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 6: Al Ittihad (Lby) 1 Sahel SC (Ngr) 0; APR FC (Rwa) 7 Anseba SC (Eri) 1; ASFA Yennenga (BuF) 3 Julius Berger (Nig) 2; Bakili Bullets (Mwi) 2 SC Villa (Uga) 1; Petro Atletico (Ang) 3 Atletico Malabo (EqG) 1; SuperSport United (SAf) 5 Civics (Nam) 0.
Mar 7: AmaZulu (Zim) 3 Maxaquene (Moz) 1; Armed Forces (Gam) 0 Jeanne d'Arc (Sen) 3; ASFAG (Gui) 0 Diaraf Dakar (Sen) 1; AS Aviacao (Ang) 1 SC Cimenterie Lukala (DRC) 1; Dragons l'Oueme (Ben) 1 AS Douanes (Tog) 1; Hassania Agadir (Mor) 7 ASC NASR Sebkha (Mra) 0; Matlama (Les) 0 Orlando Pirates (SAf) 3; Simba SC (Tan) 1 Zanaco (Zam) 0; St George (Eth) 1 Al Hilal (Sud) 2; St Michel Oueneze (Con) 2 US Bitam (Gab) 0; Stade Malien (Mli) 0 Hearts of Oak (Gha) 0.
Mar 8: Eco Redipharm Toamasina (Mad) 0 St Michel United (Sey) 0.

Stade Tamponnaise (Reu) v AS Port Louis 2000 (Mrs) – Stade Tamponnaise withdrew; AS Port Louis walkover
Asante Kotoko (Gha) v AS Tempete Mocaf (CAR) – Tempete Mocaf withdrew; Asante Kotoko walkover
AS Vita Club (DRC) v Ulinzi Stars (Ken) – Ulinzi Stars withdrew; Vita Club walkover

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 19: Civics 0 SuperSport United 1 *SuperSport 6-0 on agg.*
Mar 20: Diaraf Dakar 2 ASFAG 1 *Diaraf 3-1 on agg*; Julius Berger 0 ASFA Yennenga 0 *ASFA Yennenga 3-2 on agg*; Orlando Pirates 4 Matlama 0 *Orlando Pirates 7-0 on agg*; Sahel SC 2 Al Ittihad 0 *Sahel 2-1 on agg*; St Michel United 2 Eco Redipharm Toamasina 0 *St Michel 2-0 on agg.*
Mar 21: Al Hilal 1 St George 1 *Al Hilal 3-2 on agg*; Anseba SC 2 APR FC 4 *APR 11-3 on agg*; Atletico Malabo 1 Petro Atletico 3 *Petro Atletico 6-2 on agg*; SC Cimenterie Lukala 0 AS Aviacao 1 *AS Aviacao 2-1 on agg*; AS Douanes 0 Dragons l'Oueme 0 *Agg 1-1. AS Douanes on away goals*; Hearts of Oak 2 Stade Malien 0 *Hearts of Oak 2-0 on agg*; Jeanne d'Arc 3 Armed Forces 0 *Jeanne d'Arc 6-0 on agg*; Maxaquene 3 AmaZulu 4 *AmaZulu 7-4 on agg*; US Bitam 2 St Michel Oueneze 0 *Agg 2-2. St Michel 4-3 on pens*; SC Villa 0 Bakili Bullets 0 *Bakili Bullets 2-1 on agg*; Zanaco 3 Simba SC 1 *Zanaco 3-2 on agg.*

ASC NASR Sebkha v Hassania Agadir – ASC NASR withdrew from second leg; Hassania walkover

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 5: ASC Entente (Mra) 0 CS Etoile Guinea (Gui) 2.
Mar 6: Al Merreikh (Sud) 1 Green Buffaloes (Zam) 0; Chemelil Sugar (Ken) 0 Mtibwa Sugar (Tan) 2; Diables Noirs (Con) 2 Deportivo Mongomo (EqG) 2; Djoliba (Mli) 1 Wallidan (Gam) 0; Express FC (Uga) 2 Coffee FC (Eth) 1; Mogas '90 (Ben) 1 Al Nasr (Lby) 0; Omnisport Bouafle (IvC) 3 Olympic FC (Ngr) 2; Saint Louis (Sey) 2 Leopards Transfoot (Mad) 2; Savanne SC (Mrs) 0 Dynamos (Zim) 0; Stade Tunisien (Tun) 6 ASC Thies (Sen) 0.
Mar 7: Etoile Filante (BuF) 2 Dynamic Togolais Lome (Tog) 0; Ferroviario (Moz) 1 Wits University (SAf) 2; Kiyovu Sports (Rwa) 0 US Mbila Nzami (Gab) 1.

Olympic Real Bangui (CAR) v Petro Huambo (Ang) – Olympic Real withdrew; Petro Huambo walkover

1st rnd, 2nd legs

Mar 19: ASC Thies 3 Stade Tunisien 0 *Stade Tunisien 6-3 on agg.*
Mar 20: Al Nasr 5 Mogas '90 0 *Al Nasr 5-1 on agg*; Deportivo Mongomo 0 Diables Noirs 0 *Agg 2-2. Mongomo on away goals*; Dynamic Togolais Lome 0 Etoile Filante 0 *Etoile Filante 2-0 on agg*; Green Buffaloes 2 Al Merreikh 0 *Green Buffaloes 2-1 on agg*; Mtibwa Sugar 2 Chemelil Sugar 1 *Mtibwa Sugar 4-1 on agg*; US Mbila Nzami 2 Kiyovu Sports 1 *US Mbila Nzami 3-1 on agg*; Wits University 4 Ferroviario 0 *Wits University 6-1 on agg.*
Mar 21: Coffee SC 0 Express FC 0 *Express 2-1 on agg*; Dynamos 3 Savanne SC 0 *Dynamos 3-0 on agg*; CS Etoile Guinea 2 ASC Entente 0 *Etoile Guinea 4-0 on agg*; Leopards Transfoot 4 Saint Louis 0 *Leopards 6-2 on agg*; Olympic FC 1 Omnisport Bouafle 0 *Agg 3-3. Olympic on away goals*; Wallidan 3 Djoliba 1 *Wallidan 3-2 on agg.*

ASIA

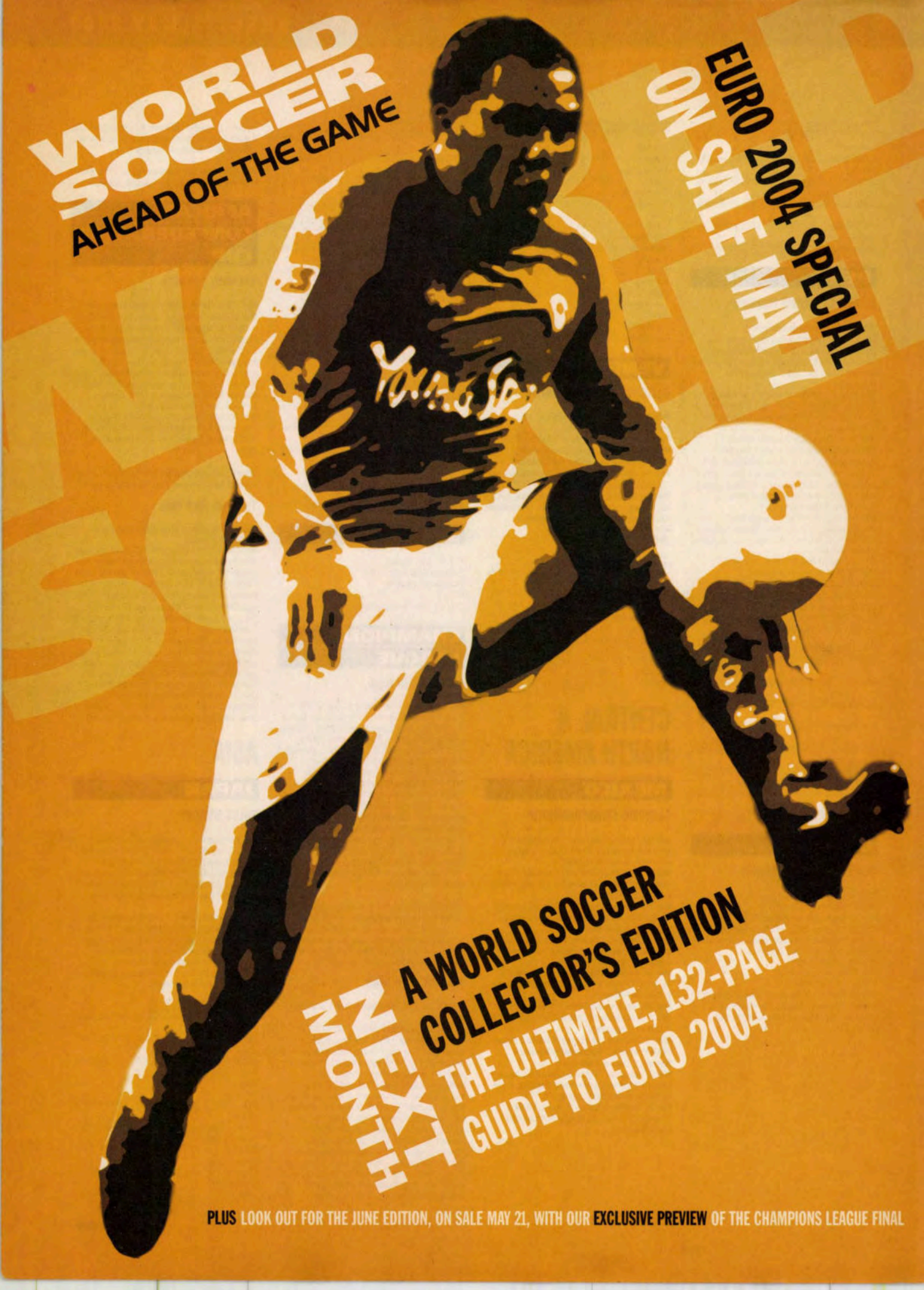
JAPAN

FIRST STAGE

Mar 13: Yokohama F Marinos 1 Urawa Reds 1; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Oita Trinita 1; Kashima Antlers 1 Gamba Osaka 1; FC Tokyo 1 Albirex Niigata 0; Vissel Kobe 2 JEF United Ichihara 1; Cerezo Osaka 1 Nagoya Grampus Eight 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 1; Jubilo Iwata 2 Tokyo Verdy 1969 0.
Mar 20: Shimizu S-Pulse 1 Kashima Antlers 2; Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Jubilo Iwata 3; Albirex Niigata 0 Vissel Kobe 0; Oita Trinita 2 FC Tokyo 1; JEF United Ichihara 3 Yokohama F Marinos 0; Gamba Osaka 1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 0.
Mar 21: Tokyo Verdy 1969 0 Kashiwa Reysol 1; Urawa Reds 4 Cerezo Osaka 2.

JAPAN – FIRST STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jubilo Iwata	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Kashiwa Reysol	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Urawa Reds	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Kashima Antlers	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Gamba Osaka	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Vissel Kobe	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
JEF United	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Oita Trinita	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
FC Tokyo	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Grampus Eight	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Shimizu S-Pulse	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Sanfrecce H	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Albirex Niigata	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Yokohama FM	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Cerezo Osaka	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Tokyo Verdy	2	0	0	2	0	3	0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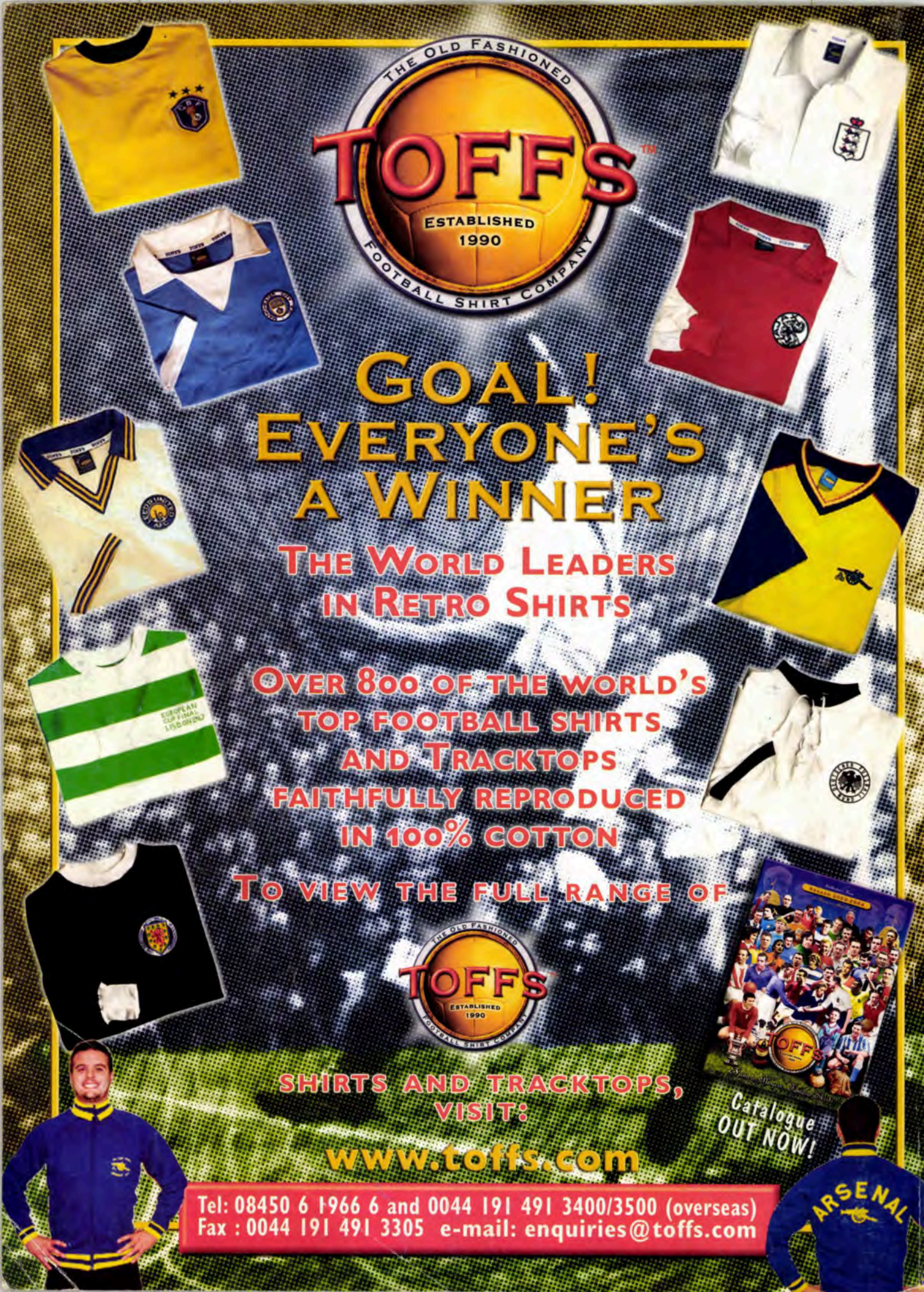
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